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**Volume XI**

**October 1934 to March 1935**

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A DISTINGUISHED and cynical observer of current events remarked the other day that at no previous moment in human history had there been so much activity and so little achievement in the literary world. We do not propose on this occasion to discuss the implications of his remark, beyond suggesting that his verdict on what he saw was quite probably correct, but that equally probably his opinion was arrived at through not knowing where to look to see something else. We suspect that there are quite a number of other people, bemused by the loud cries of popular critics and over-enthusiastic publishers, who would endorse his opinion; we suspect further that they are victims of the same error. It is, in brief, beyond the ability of anyone who does not devote his whole time to the task to know precisely what is happening in the literary world to-day, and only to one person in a thousand is given the requisite time to do so. For the other nine hundred and ninety nine (or rather for those of them who are not content indefinitely to share the distinguished cynic's bewilderment) there is the alternative of relying on the literary pages of *THE SPECTATOR*. In the adjoining column is given a list of writers who have contributed to our literary pages during the first half of 1934. We believe that their names alone will be enough to substantiate our contention that our literary pages have an authority and distinction which are to-day unrivalled among English periodicals.

W. B. Yeats  
T. S. Eliot  
E. M. Forster  
Aldous Huxley  
Julian Huxley  
Norman Angell  
G. K. Chesterton  
H. W. Nevinson  
Graham Greene  
Ann Bridge  
Stella Benson  
Seán O'Faolain  
Edmund Blunden  
Herbert Read  
Bonamy Dobrée  
V. Sackville-West  
V. S. Pritchett  
Peter Fleming  
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NEWS SUMMARY — BOOKS — COUNTRY LIFE — THEATRE — FINANCE

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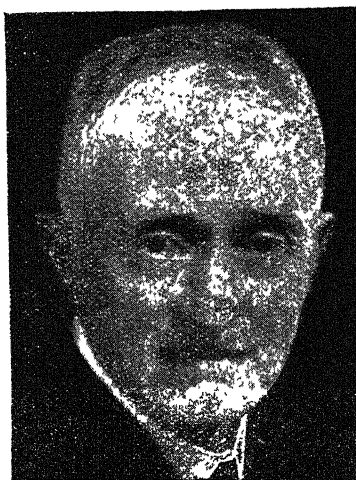
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Vol. xi. No. 58

Monthly

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There will be no propaganda, unless a desire for peace, for freedom and for friendliness between nations can be called propaganda. There will be more anonymous articles both on life and letters. The title of the magazine is not an antithesis. Life is not the opposite of letters ; literature is the expression and the interpretation of life and, at the same time, a part of life. It is life's movement. The life of the

mind as expressed in literature is an integral part of the life of man, body and soul. But, as in its past history, the main interest of this review will be literature.

During his editorship Mr. MacCarthy made LIFE AND LETTERS an organ both of the old and the new. Here has been published work by Thomas Hardy, Max Beerbohm, George Santayana, Hilaire Belloc, Arthur Symonds, Augustine Birrell, E. M. Forster, Edith Wharton, Lytton Strachey, Vernon Lee, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, David Garnett and Virginia Woolf. Those acute critics F. L. Lucas and G. M. Young have contributed. Among younger writers—David Cecil, Peter Quennell, Romilly John, William Plomer, Evelyn Waugh, Antonia White, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden have also written for it. This brief catalogue shows that LIFE AND LETTERS has a memorable past, even apart from such adventures as the devoting of a single number to Richard Hughes' *High Wind in Jamaica*, and another to Samuel Butler alone (here first appeared the true history of Butler and Paul), and the publication of the murderer, S. H. Dougal's account of his relations with Miss Holland and of his crime.

Mr. MacCarthy has consented to act with me as advisory editor.

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A DISTINGUISHED and cynical observer of current events remarked the other day that at no previous moment in human history had there been so much activity and so little achievement in the literary world. We do not propose on this occasion to discuss the implications of his remark, beyond suggesting that his verdict on what he saw was quite probably correct, but that equally probably his opinion was arrived at through not knowing where to look to see something else. We suspect that there are quite a number of other people, bemused by the loud cries of popular critics and over-enthusiastic publishers, who would endorse his opinion; we suspect further that they are victims of the same error. It is, in brief, beyond the ability of anyone who does not devote his whole time to the task to know precisely what is happening in the literary world to-day, and only to one person in a thousand is given the requisite time to do so. For the other nine hundred and ninety nine (or rather for those of them who are not content indefinitely to share the distinguished cynic's bewilderment) there is the alternative of relying on the literary pages of *THE SPECTATOR*. In the adjoining column is given a list of writers who have contributed to our literary pages during the first half of 1934. We believe that their names alone will be enough to substantiate our contention that our literary pages have an authority and distinction which are to-day unrivalled among English periodicals.

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Mr. MacCarthy has consented to act with me as advisory editor.

## Editor's Advertisement

The future success of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, however, depends on its readers as well as on its contributors.

It is one of the editorial tasks to act as a liaison officer between his authors and his readers: authors are ready enough with suggestions, but readers are rather shy about expressing their views. I hope they will overcome this. What every editor would like to know is, not only what his readers chiefly value in a magazine, but why those who do not read it are left unconvinced by the elect who do; but readers must not expect a magazine which does not cater for a single group to please everyone every month from the first page to the last.

R. ELLIS ROBERTS.

DEAR ELLIS ROBERTS,

I have read your editorial note for the October number, and I am very pleased to be associated again with *LIFE AND LETTERS*, if only in an ancillary way, from November onwards.

I was glad when Messrs. Cape took it over. We have something to learn from that brief interlude. On the whole I did not think the magazine improved under the new direction; but there is no doubt that during those few months with Mr. Hamish Miles' editorship *LIFE AND LETTERS* published some remarkable contributions which would not have been so likely to come my own way. And there, by the bye, lies one of the principal difficulties ahead. You say in your note that the success of *LIFE AND LETTERS* depends on its readers as well as its writers. Yes, if the readers do not like it, it is bound

to die. But experience has taught me that what often decides the fate of a magazine is the attitude, not of the reader, but the writer, or potential contributor, towards it. It is absurd that England should not be able to support several literary magazines. They are necessary to writers. Yet when one is started it is invariably crabbed by those who stand to gain most by its continued existence. The reader is probably satisfied if he or she finds two or three items in a number which give pleasure. Not so the contributor, who usually proceeds (after receiving a compliment on his own work) to agree enthusiastically with anyone who says that the magazine is a packet of rubbish. If this is a form of modesty, it is an unfortunate one. Many literary magazines have been talked to death by young writers, who then find they have no place to put their work, no way of earning even a few pounds by it. Writers are naturally cliquey. They like to appear with birds of their own feather. But this is only possible when there is a great deal of talent about of the same kind – and then only for a short time. The Public want variety. Contributors must therefore put up with what they may consider the feeble catholicity of *LIFE AND LETTERS*. It may not be for either A, B or C an ideal receptacle, but it is a receptacle, and a great deal better than none. Keep it as wide as possible. My difficulty as editor was that possible contributors supposed that I wanted the next number to be exactly like the last, or that because I had published so-and-so's work I could not possibly appreciate theirs. It was not true.

Yours always,  
DESMOND MACCARTHY.

# The Affairs of Men

---

## IN EUROPE NOW

DURING the last few months the psychological map of Europe has changed to an astonishing extent. It is interesting to attempt to find the crucial moments as well as the vital factors. The relations between Italy and Germany have produced the most complete and important *volte face*. It is more profound and far-reaching than a matter of political expediency. The Latin is revolting against the barbarian, the Fascist is incensed by the 'Nordic' caricature of Fascism. Wotan is no more absurd to the Pope than a German challenge to the glories that were Rome is to Signor Mussolini. And to the Duce the 'were' is also an 'are' and a 'will be.'

The Venice meeting was a complete fiasco. The Italian crowds reserved their cheers for their own man. Signor Mussolini, who is a profound opportunist – this is a compliment and not a paradox – with considerable irony and shrewdness, was appalled to find that Herr Hitler talked in private almost exactly as he talks in public. This curious misconception of public and private life shocked a man who is an acute assessor of his public, be it 100,000 believers or one sceptical individual.

The journalist side of Mussolini, who is essentially *dernière heure*, has never been appreciated by world opinion. He is always more affected by current events than pledged to

preconceived ideas. This is his great strength as a political force. He is able to change his mind behind the smoke screen of a strong personality. Herr Hitler – leaving all moral and political considerations on one side – is a mystic and a medium who will always appear somewhat ridiculous to the Latin mind. The Wagnerian scene is not set in an atmosphere of grapes and sunshine. The danger of the Germans on the Brenner is a matter of grave moment to the statesman and to the politically minded, but German self-glorification maddens the man in the street and the man in the street is the man in the trench.

\* \* \*

It is difficult to know to what degree the Italian Government egged Dr. Dollfuss on in his provocative anti-socialist policy, but the February uprising with its foolishly brutal suppression was a blow to Italian policy, as in those few days Austria lost her position as the petted David of Europe heroically facing Goliath. The revolting details of the Dollfuss murder did a good deal to retrieve the situation, and it is with no desire to disparage that gay, courageous, personally charming and politically single-minded little Catholic that one must recognize that Dollfuss dead is a far greater asset to Austrian independence than Dollfuss living. There has been inevitably a strong anti-Nazi revulsion, and the

# The Affairs of Men

fact that Doctor von Schuschnigg was unconnected with the February events, and, though an avowed Monarchist, is less anti-Socialist and more anti-Fascist than any of his colleagues, has enabled him to pursue a policy of appeasement in a more favourable atmosphere than could have been hoped for at any time during the last few months.

But it is useless to deny that a large number of Austrians who detest Hitlerism as such, abhor the alternative of an Italian protectorate.

\* \* \*

The improvement in Franco-Italian relations must be warmly welcomed. Italy has always suffered from an inferiority complex where France is concerned, and the French have undoubtedly been somewhat grudging in their appreciation of the Italian contribution to the Allied victory. They have also perhaps been somewhat tactlessly self-controlled in their indifference to Fascist gibes. But the two great Latin countries are coming together in a common detestation of the barbarian, and Monsieur Barthou's impending visit to Rome should produce fruitful and far-reaching results.

\* \* \*

The attitude of the Little Entente and Poland is causing considerable anxiety to the Quai d'Orsay. Both Poland and Yugo-Slavia are veering more and more towards Germany, and Rome and Belgrade vie with one another in the acerbity of their polemics.

The Serbs are universally recog-

nized as magnificent fighters, and the Italians have been forced to ransack the fourteenth century for proofs of their cowardice. The Yugo-Slavs have not been content to go so far back in their researches, and a situation of great tension exists between the two countries. It seems a pity that with a Government-controlled Press, a little soft-peddalling of nationalistic outbursts should not be possible.

\* \* \*

The entry of Soviet Russia into the League is a matter of first-class importance. Even though fear of Japan rather than love of peace may be her motive, the desirability of intimate, automatic and continuous contact between the representatives of the Great Powers cannot be challenged by any reasonable person. A purely Franco-Russian alliance would have done much more to alarm world opinion than more general agreements arrived at within the framework of the Geneva.

\* \* \*

Dictatorships are alternatives to thought, and their prevalence in Europe to-day is due to the extreme exhaustion which resulted from the War. Just as an individual will go into a nursing home after a nervous breakdown, so various peoples have preferred to abdicate the responsibilities of Government and call in a quack or super-man. But this curious mental apathy has not extended to the spiritual sphere. Alone in Germany the two great Churches are fighting for their faith. In a world being rapidly made fit for sheep only to live in, it is refreshing to recognize the heroic mould of

# The Affairs of Men

men like Cardinal Faulhaber and Doctor Niemöller. It is perhaps not generally known that during the white terror which succeeded the assassination of Kurt Eisner in Munich the Cardinal, then in a less invulnerable position, was already preaching tolerance to the Jews. To the 7,000 dissident pastors and their leaders, the Bishops Wurm (Württemberg), Mahrrens (Hanover) and Heiser (Bavaria), the sympathy and admiration of the whole world must go out. There has never been any tradition of political liberty in Germany, but the tradition of religious freedom has come down from the days of Luther. The Church defeated Bismarck in the Kultur-Kampf; it may well end by defeating lesser men.

\* \* \*

The Saar is for the moment the most acute danger spot in Europe. Before the clean-up of June 30th and the persecution of Catholics in Bavaria and elsewhere, ninety per cent. of the population would have voted for Germany. A majority no doubt still will. But the minority will be large enough to cause an extremely unpleasant situation. Frenchmen, when they talk privately, express nothing but a desire to get the whole thing over and done with. Many, if not most of them, would prefer the Saar to go to Germany rather than a prolongation of the *status quo*, with the continuous agitation that must necessarily accompany it. This is no doubt the reasonable view, but it is difficult to contemplate with equanimity the appalling persecutions and reprisals that will descend on those Catholics, Liberals, intellectuals, Socialists and Jews who have

dared to vote according to their consciences. It is to be doubted whether any police force in the world – even if it outnumbered the inhabitants to the extent that Lord Trenchard's subordinates outnumbered Sir Oswald Mosley's supporters – could ensure free elections. No one can envy the task which confronts the indomitable Mr. Knox.

\* \* \*

The publication of the Guillaune Report, with its unsavoury details concerning the private life of Conseiller Prince and its amazing revelations of the carelessness and incompetence of the police and medical authorities, has caused less of a sensation than might have been expected. The police are on trial throughout France for their handling of the Stavisky scandal – here right and left are united – but the case of the death of M. Prince had become a political matter, the right believing in murder and the left in suicide – advocating would perhaps be a better word. The independent experts – with the exception of certain doctors – are unanimously convinced that it was a case of suicide, and as this view is shared, we are informed on unimpeachable authority, by a majority of the Cabinet, the guns of the right have been somewhat spiked and the possibilities of a second *Affaire Dreyfus* have been eliminated. M. Léon Daudet will continue to have a lot to say, and say it with his customary brilliance. It is the possibility of a solution that makes crime interesting, and the majority of French people have given up the *Affaire Prince* as insoluble and have therefore lost interest in it.

# The Affairs of Men

The election of M. Chautemps to the Senate proves how indifferent the provinces are to Parisian agitation and Parisian agitators. The provinces are the backbone and the essence of French political life, and it has been said that both M. Tardieu and M. Léon Blum, for all their brilliant gifts and dominating personalities, have never altogether been able to overcome the handicap of being Parisians.

\* \* \*

It will be very interesting to see the effect that the Socialist-Communist united front has on French political life. Will the new allies find it easier to blend their ideas than the Socialists and the Radical Socialists did in the days of the Cartel? Has the left been strengthened, and if so, which left? In most combinations do not the extremists swallow up the moderates? What is the doctrinaire Socialist thinking and feeling? For in France the strength of Socialism lies in the strength of ideas, of an intellectual Marxian conception, and not as with us in Trade Unionism, working for better social conditions.

\* \* \*

If only Lord Palmerston, that virtuoso of the penultimate, were alive! Twice, when Japan left the League and when Germany (*pace* Mr. Vernon Bartlett) left the League, one loud bark would have been worth a dozen diffident bites. When you talk of English foreign policy(!) abroad, the eminent, being cautious and courteous, speak with the hushed tones accorded to the dead. But after the two minutes' silence of the Armistice is over, conversation breaks loose. Poor Mr. Eden, universally respected and be-

lieved, trots round Europe travelling with a sample but no line of goods. Ultimately Great Britain does as much as and sometimes more than, any other, country. Penultimately she does nothing. To rise to occasions is no doubt magnificent, but to avert them is more intelligent, and less expensive. Incidentally it is the job of diplomacy. *Mot de la fin :*

A very eminent English diplomatist said: "The mistake we have made since the peace is that we have taken the French for the Germans and the Germans for the English."

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## MORRO CASTLE

A POPULAR American man of letters recently showed alarm over the way the world seems to be going. Though he is a humorist he was unable to find sufficient in the matter for a joke, but he brightened up towards the end of his observations. He found ease in the reflection that 'the dear old Life Force would pull humanity through'; but he did not say to what end we should be pulled through, probably because he did not know.

If only we could believe that optimism—a jolly assurance that despite appearances evil will turn to good—arises from courage, a stout heart! It may not be so. A doubt hangs about us that the genial dismissal of a warning that our work is inherently false and must be changed if we would live—that nothing really is so wrong but that an abstraction will put it right, if we cease to trouble about it, may come of nothing better than poltroonery. It certainly would be nice to believe that if only we would refuse to consider



# The Affairs of Men

what our affairs imply, then we could turn away from them in the buoyant faith that no problem exists which good luck will not put right some day. Other people have a similar faith in joss-sticks, or the vote, or dictatorship

It has been noticeable, however, that though the races for the America's Cup have prompted warm discussions, people have been shy of talking about the *Morro Castle*. At the most, that tragedy has only shown us that passenger ships should have less woodwork about them; comment went no further than woodwork. It was as if we fancied we could see phantoms and devildom through the smoke and flames of that ship, but hoped we were mistaken; we did not dare ask our neighbour whether he, too, saw anything worse in the spectacle than an unfortunate ship on fire

The pleasure cruiser flew a known and respectable house-flag. It is trusted The *Morro Castle* was a large and modern liner. The sea, of course, has no terrors now. Science has conquered them. Man has acquired controls which put the accidents and chances of life at sea with old fears of the night. In a liner so huge that not even her master may see the full length of her, except at a distance when he is not aboard her, you may get comfortably drunk at 2 a.m., stewards are there to see you are carried to the right number of your street below, and next day affairs go forward as usual, apparently by divine prompting, as impersonally as do the posts and telegraphs and the morning trains to the city.

Cellular hulls below the water line, water-tight doors operated from the bridge, detectors that announce

fire to the navigating room wherever and as soon as it appears, direction learned by wireless, depth of the sea and bearings by submarine announcements so that speed may be chanced in a fog when approaching landfall, and the gyro-compass and gyro-navigator—we are all right now. The express modern liner is the work of the engineer and physicist; attendant man has nothing to do but touch the inevitable buttons and away she goes, immune from the threats of the elemental powers. Anyhow, there is no room to doubt that the *Morro Castle* was a first-rate liner, and complied in her construction and management with all the statutes.

Yet this horror! The *Morro Castle's* was a cruise for pleasure, too, when all should go as merry as a marriage bell. So confident was everybody that their feet, if not borne up by angels, were at least in the more competent keeping of science, that farewell cocktail parties were going on, and had even gone so far that some of the merry-makers had been carried helpless to their berths when the fire or fires appeared. There is no moral reflection in this. It might happen to anyone, among the farewell drinks after a happy occasion. And why indeed should anybody worry, with all those safeguards for security about?

If a cynical sensationalist with an ugly mind had written a story which launched such a ship as a means to show folly inviting its doom, confident in its safeguards for its security, he would have been rebuked. Quite piously rebuked, too. Despite experience, we are always sure that the dear old Life Force will pull us through.

# The Affairs of Men

We have no doubt that men will not be fools to the verge of the steep place till a day comes round once more when we see them at their wit's end. London is a community greater even than that of the greatest ship, and certainly open to threats from ill-defined powers; but with proper safeguards for its security we have nothing to fear, except panic. And if we have the safeguards, why panic?

There the *Morro Castle* was, in the dark, nearing her home port, a self-contained community girded about with all that invention could do for its welfare. The ancient sea was irrelevant. In any case, there were the boats, among other safeguards. Besides, when we are upborne by anything so immense and powerful that we cannot see all of it, nor understand its power, and observe that our neighbours never question its invulnerability, why not have a drink? The officials, too, are on watch; they know. Moreover, any reason for disaffection among the workers about us would be as invisible and unknown as the sources of conflagration. Why not turn in? We are asleep when a few far servants are trying to douse the initial smouldering, a queer interlude watched with interest, it seems, by some whose last drink was a little later than usual.

Nothing could break through the well-considered organisation of such a community. The fire appliances are all modern, and ubiquitous. Everybody knows what to do, whatever happens. Touch the nearest button. How comforting, too, nowadays, to know that other ships, all our allies, are within the call of another little button up aloft! What time breakfast in the

morning? Touch the button – we are fool-proof. Mr. Baldwin said only the other day that our frontier is now the —. Yes, yes, of course, we were talking of the safeguards and security of the *Morro Castle*. She had perfect organization; and a fire appeared at night. All the buttons were touched, but they didn't seem to work. It was only the fire that worked. The very devil seemed to be in it. Spies? Anarchy? The providential chemicals seemed to feed it. The hose-pipes gave a bulge or two, then flattened out. Aren't our engines working the pumps? – where had we better go?

Yesterday's happy travellers begin to crowd the alleyways. The dark, and the sound of the sea – that is suddenly noticed – are made remarkable by flames in a place where quoits and tennis were being played last noon. Where's the captain? He knows all about it. But that unlucky man has a complex task which is so great, as ships are now, as communities are now, that his well-planned organization with its safeguards for everybody's security becomes as futile as a safety-pin in an avalanche. He is helpless. The simple truth is that no organization and no regulations and safeguards will hold the flooding emotions of a multitude suddenly terrified by the apparent breakdown of its recondite security, the science of which it never understood. The pride which foundered the *Titanic* is forgotten. If the flames of the *Morro Castle* do not warn us of the peril inherent in affairs grown monstrous yet made quite secure – when all seems well – with little buttons that only need touching when necessary, then what flames are we waiting for as a signal?

# The Affairs of Men

POLITICAL questions still have an odd tendency to follow ecclesiastical patterns. No one who was at the Labour Conference and heard the controversy between Mr. Bevin and Mr. Bevan could fail to be reminded of the bitterness of theological quarrels; while Sir Stafford Cripps and his group were excommunicated in the manner familiar to students of church conflicts. As in these conflicts, it is probable that the official Labour Party has taken advantage of formal rules in order to 'larn' Sir Stafford to be a nuisance; and his subsequent election to the executive may be the first step in a transformation as sadly realistic as the metamorphosis of Macdonald. At present, however, he is all the party has of ginger. No one admits to needing ginger: everyone resents the implication that his condition is so poor that ginger has to be administered.

There may be a real change of opinion about the seriousness of the Fascist movement in this country. Here it is likely that the Labour Party is right and the Socialist League and the Communists wrong. So long as Sir Oswald Mosley's followers could be confused with Boy Scouts the average Englishman did not mind them. As soon as they make any pretensions to be an amateur army they will find those pretensions bitterly and riotously resented. Those who were in Hyde Park at the great Fascist fiasco agree in the opinion that Mosley was booed and catcalled

into silence, not by ardent Communists, but by a proper Cockney crowd, the good-humoured, serious, critical crowd of London.

THE reception of the news of the Welsh mining disaster shows that the public can still be shocked by a large-scale catastrophe. What is so disconcerting is the public's inability to be shocked at the less spectacular, because less concentrated, catastrophes which occur on the roads. Terrible as is the death roll in the Gresford mine, it is small enough in comparison with Juggernaut's unwilling victims. No doubt the public's relative indifference to the slaughter by automobile is because most of the public have or travel in motor cars: very few of us own mines, so we can satisfy our sense of pity and horror by denouncing mine-owners (if we think them guilty of negligence), but are careful in our attack on negligences of which tomorrow we may be guilty. Meanwhile Mr. Hore-Belisha's effort to cope with the traffic problem is proceeding. A few silly and furious motorists are protesting against the safety lanes - which have been in successful existence in Paris now for over two years. One Jehu wrote to the papers to say that a motorist could not stop his car when he approached a lane on which pedestrians were crossing: yet he can stop without any difficulty for a red light, or a policeman's arm, or if the car in front of him is suddenly and unexpectedly checked.

# Roger Fry: an appreciation

by Michael E. Sadler

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ON many English people of my generation two men – Roger Fry and C. J. Holmes – by writing about the design of pictures and the significance of art, had a trenchant and, within limits, even a crystallizing influence. There are, of course, other living English writers who have coloured our ideas about the pattern and purpose of painting, and have etched their thoughts on our minds – such as Bernhard Berenson, D. S. MacColl, Henry Tonks, Clive Bell, Laurence Binyon and, more recently, R. H. Wilenski, Eric Gill, and Herbert Read; with Frank Rutter and Charles Marriott in the columns of the press, and the late E. J. van Wisselingh, the late Martin Leggatt, P. M. Turner, Alec Martin, D. M. Macdonald, Ralph Keene, Oliver Brown, F. Mayor, Sydney Burney, and Mrs. Wertheim, among the dealers. But Holmes and Fry stand out by the degree of their achievement in changing the canons of our judgment and taste – Holmes chiefly by his book modestly called *Notes on the Science of Picture-making*, by his *Notes on the Art of Rembrandt*, and by *The Grammar of the Arts*: Fry, in part by his public lectures (he was one of the best lecturers of our day), in part

by the volume of collected essays to which he gave the arresting name *Vision and Design*, by some of the papers which he included in the volume entitled *Transformations*, and by his study of the development of Cézanne.

Like Holmes, Fry was a painter. Their knowledge of the craft gave a tang to their talk about it, as it did to Fromentin's *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*, to some of Ruskin's pieces, to Vincent van Gogh's letters to his brother, and to Vernon Blake's *Relation in Art*. Partly by their timeliness, partly by their moral courage, most of all by a fundamental quality in their judgment, Holmes and Fry impressed a certain character on much contemporary English thinking about art, just as Keynes and Cole have done in the sphere of political economics; as Lytton Strachey and Harold Nicolson have done in diplomatic biography; as Havelock Ellis and B. Malinowski have done in regard to the psychology of sex; as W. T. Arnold, Eyre Crowe, and Spenser Wilkinson gave a sharp turn to the wheel of our thoughts about the defence of the realm; as Bertrand Russell and Edmond Holmes did for our perception of the ethical and social presuppositions of school-train-

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ing, whether private or under public authority; and as Bernard Shaw, Dr. Inge, Dr. B. H. Streeter, G. K. Chesterton, John Macmurray and Fathers D'Arcy and Martindale have done as regards our disposition towards belief.

Fry's and Holmes' writing about art is less emotional than German interpretative criticism of the school of Meier-Graefe, less institutional and standardized than that of the Central European authorities marshalled for the Propylaen Kunst-Geschichte: less mordant than the French dealer Ambrose Vollard's, less stencilled than the journalism of Camille Mauclair and his like: less prone to go off the deep end than the Americans A. J. Eddy and Gertrude Stein. Fry and Holmes are as different as Harold Laski and Mr. Baldwin. But we have learnt from both of them to see modern painting and sculpture with eyes less dimmed by habit and inattention.

## II

Certain families in England transmit exceptional power of mind or feeling. This power shows itself in different forms in successive generations. The sap in the family tree is strong with the Darwins, the Arnolds, the Huxleys, the Cecils, the Woods, the Macaulays, the Priestleys, the Wedgwoods, the Lyttons, the Venns, the Pollocks, the Gilpins, and the Frys. Behind the personality of Roger Fry, highly individualized as he was, one saw the aura of the family talent. And it was no accident that one of his sisters bore a part, perhaps a decisive part, in persuading and helping him

to assemble and revise for publication in volume form, writings that would otherwise have been fugitive and half-forgotten (The dedication in *Vision and Design* reads: 'To my sister Margery without whose gentle but persistent pressure this book would never have been made.')

The Quakerly tradition of the Frys took a new form in Roger but is, I think, the key to his temperament. Members of the Society of Friends are bred in sincerity. Sincerity of vision, integrity of mind, fearlessness, devotion to honesty in judgment and in utterance, were fundamental in Roger Fry's character and writing. He had liberty. He had travelled far away from the tone and tune of Friends' Meeting, but he was *chuen de race*. In what he wrote about art there was the reality, the warmth, the plainness, the sudden thrill of the right word, which mark Quaker speech about what has been personally experienced and is therefore believed. And often in Roger Fry's method of approaching the question of what is significant and crucial in a painter's purpose and pattern, there was more than an echo of the spiritual exercises of the Society of Friends – exercises akin to what is most human, tender and discriminating in the way of dealing with conscience practised by experienced Catholic and Anglo-Catholic priests. It was this holy guile in Roger Fry's lectures which made him half Quaker, half Jesuit. He smiled on one with enchanting compassion, but was formidable with his masked batteries of erudition. He was gay, like a good priest; but hanging on a nail behind him, one saw the stole of authority.

# Roger Fry: an appreciation

## III

On the bole of a mulberry tree there are two kinds of leaf – so different that you would not think of them as belonging to the same tree. In the same fashion, when you look at the leaves of his books, you might fancy that there were two Frys. There was the Fry who in his thirties was (I am told on good authority) in the front rank of contemporary English judges of early Italian painting, and among English students of early French painting supreme. This was the Fry who, in the nineties, was designated as Poynter's successor in the Directorship of the National Gallery. We should have had him in Trafalgar Square instead of Holroyd, had not official routine delayed the nomination till Fry had pledged himself to accept the Curatorship of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and did not feel free to give the Americans back-word. Then there was the other Fry, who was to the pundits *hézem* (to use the Hebrew word), like Jericho cursed by Joshua – the Fry who, by his exciting Post-Impressionist shows at the Grafton Gallery, tried to 'enable the dullness of our blinded sight' to see the significance of Cézanne and the magic of Matisse. This was the same Fry, who chose as one of the illustrations of his chapter on the French Post-Impressionists, the Profile (with a blackened eye) by Georges Rouault, adding the comment that it showed 'profound knowledge of natural appearances' and came 'from the author's collection.' And the same Fry rallied in the Omega workshops a brilliant brigade of young artists – since famous

– who painted screens and furniture and designed carpets and textiles with seminal originality before the War, pioneers of what, twenty years later, the public begins to find to its taste. This was the Fry who had a 'concern' to carry into provincial cities – I had the good fortune to come across it in Birmingham – a collection of paintings by then unknown painters of high talent, because like John Woolman, he found himself 'united with the suffering seed.'

But there were not two Frys, but one Fry. He had experienced (but in his own non-theological way) what the Evangelicals call conversion. Sometime before 1912 (I do not know the exact year) 'a fire and a hammer broke and dissolved his heart.' There is a premonition of this in the preface, which he wrote in 1905 to his edition of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses*. 'Tradition may degenerate into sterility, for the laws of artistic expression differ in this from those of science, that their value is not fixed once for all: it depends upon the ardour and force of conviction with which they are accepted. . . . Nearly always the genuine artist has been among the iconoclasts. . . . But the rising generation of artists, especially in England, is turning with a new reverence to the art of the past: is beginning to realise that there are problems in art, the solution of which requires the persistent application of intelligence rather than the improvization of genius. We are tired of a too self-assertive individualism; and we are ready to listen with profit to the sage counsels and constructive policy of Reynolds.'

This is the key to the paradox of

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Fry – to the developing unity of fundamental doctrine which underlay his artistic intuition and faith. Because he was eagerly alive, honest and sensitive to true values, his pen and his voice taught us to catch something of what he had learnt, in orgasms of sensibility and divination, from Chou bronzes, from Giotto, from Raphael, from the imaginative symmetry of Fra Bartolommeo, from the plastic power of Gabun sculpture, from Claude and Chinese landscape, from Corot's drawings of women, and from the frenzied vehemence of Vincent; from Seurat, Chardin, Kandinsky and McKnight Kauffer. Fry was not eclectic, but unifying. The saint knows sanctity even in a brothel. Fry perceived beauty under any Cinderella disguise. He stretched our understandings, tore away the membrane of our prejudice, united himself with the beauty which his eye and spirit discerned, and rubbed away, like chalk under a duster, pedantries of preference for 'old masters' or for 'modern art'.

Therefore it was a natural expression of his genius (genius is not too sacred a word for the interpretations which from time to time flashed from his spirit) that he should have been the true begetter of the *Burlington Magazine* and also have shocked the sanhedrim by his modernism. He was as brave as von Tschudi, whom the Kaiser did down. 'One of the greatest critics of our time, von Tschudi' (Fry wrote in 1920) – 'of Swiss origin, I hasten to add, and an enemy of the Kaiser – was showing me El Greco's "Laocoon" which he had just bought for Munich, when he whispered to me, as being too dangerous a doctrine to be spoken

aloud even in his private room, "Do you know why we admire El Greco's handling so much? Because it reminds us of Cézanne."'

The year before the War, Bach's Matthew Passion was performed at the University of Leeds. On the walls of the room hung a great table of the atomic numbers of the elements, and microphotograms of gold and silver showing exquisite patterns like Roger Fry's fabrics from the Omega workshop or parts of a rug from Chinese Turkestan. All was in keeping – music, microphotograms, and memories of Fry's designs. But it was he who had unsealed our understanding.

### IV

To an Oxford nose Fry smelt of Cambridge. He was unsnobbish; scientifically learned; unsweetened; on occasion, ruthless; Platonist not Aristotelian; and averse to the profitable courtesies of compromise.

He was never Professor of Fine Art at Oxford. But if the choice had depended on popular suffrage among the young, he would have been elected hands down. Our Arts Club, which is mostly under thirty years of age, would rather have him as guest and lecturer than any living man or woman in the whole kaleidoscope of the League of Nations, with the United States and Germany thrown in. Once we asked him at very short notice. He was in Norfolk, indisposed, but he came. The bills which he lithographed for us were only posted three days before the lecture. He had promised to speak in the hall of

# Roger Fry: an appreciation

University College – from the dais on which William Morris made his startling confession of Socialism, with Ruskin sitting like a bird with croup huddled in a chair at his feet. Half an hour before Fry's lecture, when the tables had hardly been cleared of dinner, the hall was crammed. And the queue of disappointed latecomers stretched right across the quad into the High.

'Baudelaire,' Fry wrote in his essay on Fra Bartolommeo, 'compared the great names in art to lighthouses posted along the track of historic time. The simile, as he used it, seizes the imagination and represents a great truth, but it allows of an interpretation which the limits of a sonnet form forbade him to develop. He takes the lights of his beacons as much for granted as the sailor does the lights of real lighthouses. But the lighthouses of art do not burn with so fixed and unvarying a lustre. The light they give is always changing insensibly with each generation, now brighter, now dimmer, and often enough growing bright once more. But we sometimes forget that the lights have to be tended, or they grow faint, and may expire altogether. For them to burn brightly they must be fed by the devotion of some few spirits in each generation. If that fail for a long period they go out, and become one of those dead ineffectual names which still linger on, obstructions rather than aids to the historical voyager.'

Fry trimmed the beacons. He was unsoiled by Stock Exchange calculations of 'futures' in works of art. Like his father, he was furious when he discovered any desecration of public

values by private profit. No elder brother of Trinity House could have kept his hands cleaner from champerty.

## V

Not every great writer on education has been himself a practising schoolmaster. Locke was not, nor J. J. Rousseau, nor Kant. But, like John Dewey, they all had some experience with pupils, if not at the desk. Fry was a great writer of English, because he had the gift of divination and the grace of fortitude, not because he was a painter. But unless he had been trained to the easel and become a practising artist, he would never have been able to say some of his wisest things, or to defend fellow painters from misunderstanding and injustice. If there is a memorial exhibition of his works, it will show how diversified his talent was, how beautiful are many of his landscapes, how revealing some of his portraits, how brilliant his drawing on paper and on stone, and how buoyant was the jet of his fountain of design. No living Englishman or woman (and there are many who have won their 'Blues' in this branch of art) does anything much better than Fry's lithographed placards. And there are good drawings of Segovia and Ciudad (though they would look better in sanguine) at the end of the book which the Hogarth Press published for him in 1923 under the title of *A Sampler of Castile*.

## VI

His family and some of his friends met together on Thursday, September



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ber 13th, when Roger Fry's body was wheeled into the furnace. Never again will great audiences hear that enchanting voice, or see that noble head; that countenance, worn, tender, wistful, winning, masterful, or feel the play of his humour, which was like a wash of colour brushed suddenly over his words. It seems tragic waste that he should have gone so soon. He was only sixty-eight and there might have been ten or more mellow years. And the end was pitiful – a fall in his room, a broken pelvis, great pain, and in the retching of sickness a failure of the heart. But the very suddenness and agony of his going have made those who knew his greatness more aware of what he did for art and honesty and letters in England. And the sharp snapping of the cord of life may be the price to be paid for a juster understanding of his antiseptic, enheartening influence in our national life.

It was a lovely warm autumn afternoon at Golders Green. The sky and trees seemed to rejoice for him. We sat in silence – no prayers, no hymns. But on an inner page of the Quakerly sheet which gave his name and age there were printed the lines from Comus which end thus:

‘Yet some there be that by due steps  
aspire  
To lay their just hands on the golden  
key  
That opes the palace of eternity.’

The choice had been well made. The great Cambridge poet had thought of such a spirit, of such just courage, as Fry's

He might, if things had taken

another turn and if the age into which he was born had been less storm-tossed by inevitable doubts, have written as Pascal wrote and believed as Pascal believed. But it was fitting that at his going we should have a bit of Spinoza to read. ‘A free man thinks of death least of all things, and his wisdom is a meditation not of death but of life.’

Roger Fry would not use the name of God lightly, or easily invoke it. But what the author of the hymn in the Sarum Primer wrote was what Fry tried to make true

‘God be in my head  
And in my understanding:  
God be in mine eyes  
And in my looking.’

## VII

Much of what is greatest in criticism is involuntarily autobiographical. In 1927 Roger Fry published the most poignant of his books. It is called *Cézanne: a study of his development*. It was out of the depth of his own experience that Fry was writing when he said of Cézanne: ‘For him, as I understand his work, the ultimate synthesis of a design was never revealed in a flash; rather he approached it with infinite caution, stalking it as it were, now from one point of view, now from another, and always in fear lest a premature definition might deprive it of something of its total complexity. For him the synthesis was an asymptote towards which he was for ever approaching without ever quite reaching it: it was a reality, incapable of complete realization.’

## Roger Fry: an appreciation

And again, when he wrote, near the end of the book: 'Cézanne counts pre-eminently as a great Classic master. . . . His saying that he wished to "do Poussin again after nature" is no empty boast. Cézanne was a Classic artist, but perhaps all great Classics are made by the repression of a Romantic. In this respect we find a curious parallel to Cézanne in Flaubert. These two men indeed, though so isolated, were both typical of a certain aspect of the spiritual process of the nineteenth century, and, though so different in character, described in their lives such similar curves that the comparison between them is not altogether unilluminating. Both were children of the Romantic movement, both shared the sublime and heroic faith in art which that movement engendered, its devotion and absolutism. Both found the way by an infinitely laborious process out of the too facile formulæ of their youth to a

somewhat similar position, to an art based on passionate study of actual life but ending in a complete transformation of its data. Both were fortunately entrenched in the solid position of a modest but assured income, which enabled them to brave the violent storms of indignation which each, in his own line, provoked, not indeed from any desire for advertisement or self assertion, but as an inevitable result of following the dictates of æsthetic expression. Without this accidental protection it is unthinkable that either should have been able to function. But that condition being given, the perfect devotion of their lives to an idea, their utter disregard of all recognition by the world, have in each case something of heroic magnanimity'

All this was true of Roger Fry. We honoured and loved him for never making terms with Mammon.

# De Gloria Paradisi

From the Latin of St. Peter Damian

by Basil Blackett

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**F**OR the springs of living waters pants my parchéd soul athirst:  
Still my spirit, prison'd, exiled, longs its bars of flesh to burst,  
Straining, yearning, pining, burning for the home it knew at first.

Here it moaneth and it groaneth, faint with sin, by care fordone;  
In surrender sees the splendour of the glory that is gone:  
Sting of present sorrow sharpens memory of bliss foreknown.

In that realm of perfect peace and joy and happiness untold  
Pearly mansions gleam to heaven capped with domes of burnished gold,  
And the dwellings of the Saints are decked with riches manifold

For the building of that city only precious stones are meet:  
Polished gold, and clear as crystal, is the paving of the street.  
There nor filth, nor slime, nor mire can befoul the passer's feet.

Winter's ire, summer's fire, that fair city never knows:  
In its gardens, sweet with balsam, spring eternal breathes and blows,  
White with lily, bright with crocus, red with ever-blooming rose.

Green its fields and clean its pastures; flow with honey stream and rill:  
Fragrant scents and luscious juices aromatic herbs distil:  
Fruits that fall not bend the laden boughs of orchards flowering still.

Moon and sun and stars unsleeping keep their constant watch aright:  
Christ, the Lamb, upon that city sheds His never-failing light:  
Day perpetual reigneth alway: ne'er intrudeth Time nor Night.

Lo! the visage of each Saint there, as the Sun, in glory glows:  
Victors, jubilant, triumphant, sharing heaven's sure repose,  
They rehearse their well-fought battles and recount their conquered foes.

# De Gloria Paradisi

They are cleansed from taint of evil, lust of flesh and passion wild·  
Member wars no more with member, mind and body reconciled:  
They shall dwell in peace for ever, holy spirits undefiled.

They have turned from all that changeth to the changeless source of all:  
They behold the very beauty of the Godhead actual:  
Sweet and living waters drink they from the fount perennial.

They have caught the rhythmic measure that is life's eternity,  
Life from change and chance immune, abundant, active, joyous, free.  
Age enfeebles not and sickness saps not their virility

Therefore is their Being timeless: fleetingness is fled away:  
Ardour, vigour, valour fill them: gone corruption and decay:  
Immortality is master over death's dead mastery.

Knowing Him who knoweth all things, nought can be to them unknown:  
Each his fellow's secrets sharing shares with all the rest his own·  
In refusing and in choosing all their several wills are one.

Diverse gifts, unequal merits bring no inequality·  
Thine is what thou lov'st in others – this is heaven's charity:  
Thus belongs what each possesses to their whole community.

Surely, whereso'er the body, must the eagles gather there:  
One the Bread and One the Body which the Saints and Angels share:  
Citizens of Earth and Heaven thus their unity declare.

Always filled yet always eager for that true and living Bread:  
Pangs of hunger gnaw them never: never are they surfeited:  
What they have they still desire: still they crave and still are fed.

Anthems new and hymns of glory tuneful voices ever sing:  
Organ's music charms their ears with harmonies re-echoing:  
Laud they Him who made them victors: praise they Him who is their King.

Happy souls, that stand in presence of the King of Heaven on high,  
And behold beneath their feet this Earth and Sun and Moon and Sky  
And the clusters of the Stars that whirl in space eternally.

Christ, who art the soldier's palm-wreath, bring me to Thy city blest:  
Let me enter there, Thy veteran, and unarm at Thy behest,  
To receive my portion there, and dwell with Thine elect at rest.

Grant me strength to battle on undaunted in this ceaseless war:  
Grant me peace when I have fought my fight and earthly life is o'er:  
Be my guerdon to possess Thee utterly for evermore.

# Chatterton and You and Me

by Laurence Whistler

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CHATTERTON before he killed himself  
Danced seventeen times around a minor star  
On a cooled stone still fiery at the core,  
Poor boy if he had waited for ten dances more  
He would have been where the Eternal are.  
The sparrows now, he heard,  
Are remote dignified ancestors; his bones  
Crumbled into London; every word  
Said then in London forgotten. But the stones  
He kicked, our children's children's child shall fall  
And graze its knee against.  
And he, and we and golden lovers all  
Go dancing on a monstrous tiny stone  
About a fiery star;  
When some feel tired  
Always happy dancers waiting are  
(This way the world renews its capital).

. . . And entered with a frost of rain  
That glittered in the firelit air  
On blown hair, her blown gold hair  
And lay in flakes across her hands  
And little petals sticking to her cheeks,  
It was almost pain  
For him to breathe the known heart of her hair  
And the breath of the dark streets on her.  
Two then were one  
And the small heaven was there that loves locked doors  
Where they lay curled.  
For him: he was in Eden gates again  
And he would love her  
Always, even unto the end of the world . . .

# Chatterton and You and Me

He said this. This was done  
Many centuries ago: as many beyond to-morrow.  
Time's insignificant Stones  
Are lasting, they are stronger than bones.  
Lovers are no more than the instant joy and sorrow  
They feel. A bright match carried in a catacomb.  
A length of fiery being on the clock.  
They are not even lasting as their bones.  
Think upon stones.

# ‘In the beginning you said—’

by Elizabeth Bibesco

---

**I**N the beginning you said to me: ‘My dear,  
Who made your eyes so dark and your voice so clear,  
Who gave you the hidden wound that has banished fear?’

In the beginning you said: ‘Is life so rude  
That no emissaries of the senses shall dare intrude  
Into the boundless wastes of your solitude?’

In the beginning you said: ‘Who made you free  
Even of the woven fabric of liberty?  
Why is the night-air yours and the stretches of the sea?’

In the beginning I said: ‘I have no more defence  
Against the encroaching music of sound and sense  
My heart is yours and so is my innocence.

‘Once more I can laugh with the spring since you caught it for me.  
And pity the skylark in all of her ecstasy  
Since she cannot know the joys of captivity.’

In the beginning I said: ‘You have made me wise  
With a kiss on each eyelid to close my recalcitrant eyes  
And give me the blindness with which to see paradise.’

In the end I said: ‘It could only be you, my dear,  
Who could make my eyes so dark and my voice so clear  
And give me the ultimate wound that must banish fear.’

In the end I said: ‘You have shown me a life so rude  
That no emissaries of the senses could dare intrude  
Into the boundless wastes of my solitude.’

In the end I said: ‘You have stolen my self from me:  
Gone is the cold night and the stretches of the sea.  
You have left me only the tattered remnants of liberty.

‘But out of those tattered rags I will make the dress  
That only the wise can see and the gods possess  
Thus arrayed I will enter the freedom that fools call emptiness.’

# A Lover

by Mary Butts

---

THE two friends sat together, talking over the last night's party and particularly one man who had been there.

They were very old friends, the young actor and the woman who had given the party, who had come up from the remote country to find out what London was like; and because she knew how to give parties, people came to her house; and she had already seen a great deal of what happens in London.

They talked of the people who had got off at the party or changed partners when it had got to its riotous stage: of the two men from the Ballet who had danced: of the punch it had taken three days to make and three hours to drink. Going through it all carefully, she with an eye for failures as well as for successes: for people to ask again. for people to forget about as soon as possible.

All this done away with, she came to what she had been waiting to ask and her friend to answer—the amiable, fussy man, something of a match-maker and rather concerned for this woman who lived alone in the white Victorian house, with tall rooms good for parties and a balcony over a walled garden ending in trees. (This happened some years ago, when parties

were still gay, before they took their agonized, bitter, debauched twist.) Perhaps it had something to do with her, though she never interfered, only the people who came to the house at their worst sometimes left at their best.

'Now tell me, Alec,' she said, 'about your new friend.' She noticed at once how his voice changed, charged as he spoke with unaffected grief.

'Alan, Alan Courcy—that's his name in case you didn't get it. French—not Huguenot—Revolution, I believe. I'd rather like to tell you about him.'

'I'm listening. Go ahead.'

'I got to know him because he's a great actor gone wrong. Met him on tour—in another company. He'd understudied Richard the III and went on suddenly. I saw it by accident. He played him like a flame out of hell. White too and piteous—something I shall never forget.'

'Reading the character? I don't quite see it. Or just touching up his own personality?'

'The last, I suppose. But it was thrilling. Finished work, too: no raw edges. Then I got to know him.'

So it all came out. The family behind this Alan Courcy, a mother he adored and quarrelled with and could not do without; a step-father he played up against her so abominably that the



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hapless man periodically kicked his step-son out of the house. Some money. No need to work. Badly knocked about in the War. An equal gift for painting; for quarrelling with managers; for destroying his work unfinished. For believing in himself: for disbelieving in himself. All of which meant in Alec's simple mind that it was a case for his dear Anne, with her trick of harmonizing people. She must take Alan up, persuade him what a wonderful fellow he really was; what a wonderful world it is. Get him to become his promises, some of his promises, all of his promises. Alec was a sentimental optimist about human beings. Though when he saw the pair of them together on the stage of his own mind, his actor's eye hesitated. It was not quite so easy to see them playing opposite. Anne – tree-tall, calm and light. Alan – a conceit formed in his mind, *sur-réaliste* image of a dachshund and a snake. Heavens! how the man did wriggle about. He could see the small, pale, nervous body flinging itself from side to side in an agony of self-assertion and self-depreciation and viperish verbal depreciation of others. It would take all Anne's earth-power to restore that to its original well-being. It was Alec's faith that there had been well-being once. Besides – besides – there rose in his mind the essential thing in Alan Courcy's history, the shattering, appalling fact round which his murdered youth was impaled; and as he turned again to Anne, she saw his kind eyes full of tears.

'Besides, Anne, besides – there is the thing that happened to him. That it should have happened to him

of all people.' It passed quickly through her mind that this Alan did not look the man to be the victim of one annihilating fact, a man too flexible, too diverse. But Alec was an honest creature and not stupid when you discounted the sentiment.

'Go on,' she said.

'He told me when we first met – He was all to pieces after playing Richard. He has never told me not to tell. It was this. He was in Vienna before they ruined it. Just-before-the-War Vienna.' The sigh passed their lips without which the name of that city is never said. Alec went on: 'It was there he got engaged to a girl, a proper engagement, family and all. When the War happened he wrote and wrote. Heard she and her people were in difficulties. Brother after brother killed. Then there was the famine and he sent money. Money, you know, and love and hope. After a time he got no more answers, but he went on. Then, directly it was over, he dashed across. And couldn't find them. Utter strangers in their house. Jews. Went to their country house and found it in ruins. There had been some local fighting, and he says they must have left it in a hurry; that in a fallen-in summer-house he found her handkerchief and a book; and the beginning, only the beginning, of a dreadful letter to him. I saw that. He carries it about and he read it to me. She had never had one of his letters. Nor the money. She knew nothing. Except that he did not care for her any more.

'At last he got on her track. They'd been driven, her mother and one sister, away to some other town.

## A Lover

Became beggars together. Till she died – of starvation, really. A quick illness and no heart left. The woman who had tried to nurse her told him. “Alan,” she said when she was dying, “I’d stay if you had. But you’ve gone and I’d better go too.” Then she died. By the time he got there, they were all dead. He says he died too for a bit. Perhaps he’s never come back. Lots of us haven’t. Only one feels that we all ought to be damned decent – to see if we can help him pull through. I can’t help feeling it’s a bit up to us.’

By the time he had finished speaking, tears were running down both their cheeks.

\* \* \*

Half an hour later Anne saw Alec, on and off the stage the eternal *compère*, out of the house. That he had just filled his *rôle* she understood laughing; but she was not laughing when she turned to her desk and wrote to Alan Courcy to ask him to dinner.

\* \* \*

‘Anne Clavel, dear, I suppose you’ll be saying that I must take the job with a lowly and thankful heart and work up the part and not tell the producer that a cockney accent goes badly with iambic pentameter; and that Shakespeare talked a nice country accent with a burr, like a woolly caterpillar. How tiresome and moral and athletic, and how very, very good for me.

‘Yes, I will. You’re the only being on earth I would do it for. You are making things different. Taken a fool, trying to have a private life as much like des Esseintes as possible, out of his dark room. Opened *all* the windows, let out the musk and amber

and let in garden smells. Only why did you do it? Why? Why? Why? Why in hell or out of it should anyone bother about me, licking perfectly disgusting sores in the dark?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Anne peacefully, but gratified; ‘I don’t like septic wounds. And I couldn’t stand the tortoise.’

‘The tortoise?’

‘Don’t you remember? Your des Esseintes had its shell set with carbuncles to watch it glow as it crept round, and it killed it; and he could see the stones still shining in the dark of his infernal flat until it occurred to him where the stink came from. Some of your memories were too like that tortoise for me.’ Alan had left the deck chair and was laying on the grass in the garden at her feet. At this he dropped a moment, his face hidden, resting on his arms. She could see the slight shoulders quiver. ‘*Mon vieux*,’ she called after a moment, very gently. The ravaged, petulant head turned up to her again.

‘Witty, searching beast of a woman. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. But I won’t be like a tortoise gone bad – even a tortoise with jewels stuck in it.’

‘I never said you; only some of the things you think about.’

‘If you weren’t so utterly right, and didn’t make it rather funny, I’d lose my temper and show you what sort of a nasty, catty, self-pitying, little martyr I am. But, oh! Anne, what put it into your head to see through me so comfortingly? When I came to your party, I actually found myself behaving like a human being. I’m usually rather awful at parties. Drink too much and either

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cry or else insult my hostess; and instead I found myself indulging in an innocent frolic.' Anne thought: 'It had better come now.' She was more and more moved, as by something that seemed rather exquisite, wild and young and wounded, that had stopped fidgeting and lay on the grass at her feet, still and appeased, as if waiting for some word from her to make him stand up and let fall a great burden and then move – swiftly and harmoniously and with joy. Like a man delivered from the hell of his own mind. And from more than his mind, from what had been done to him. Like many women after the War, she had been busy patching up; spending herself on it, still young enough to expect too much, old enough to suffer, but not wholly break her heart.

'It was Alec,' she said slowly; 'he told me.'

'Dear old Alec! Such a pattern of the stage. Such a – *comprimé* of all its best traditions. So good' – his voice was gentle – 'that I bore it the other day when he put his hand on my shoulder and called me a priceless old fruit.'

'Be thankful it wasn't 'laddie'.'

'You always have an answer – the sort that put things in a better light. It would be intolerable if it wasn't true. Anne, Anna, Annette – Anna Perenna, the moon-in-and-out. Which shall I call you?' He twisted round suddenly and sat staring up at her. A dreadful change came over his face, the eyes staring, the body taut; the bright restless eyes, brown-irised, the whites shaded with blue, starting out of his head. Anne thought she had never seen eyes so haunted, so crazed with hopeless escape. Flight down the cor-

ridors of the mind, each one that ended with a door, and nailed to it the same dreadful, bleeding god. We each have one to meet, but this man's was Eros crucified. The girl he loved dying out there so slowly, one victim among those millions out in Central Europe, where the folk-wanderings meet and cross and destroy. A long time ago. . . . Heavens! what had ancient history to do with it? But man had thought he had made himself a reasonably safe place there in the heart of those lands, where Dacia once stood with its chain of towers. Till Trajan came and took the Red Tower and the palace-fortress of Sarmizegethusa; and there Rome had made for herself Vindobonda, and for us Vienna. One of the Holy Cities, last seat of the Empire. In place of so many crucifixions a place of delight. A fountain of wit and sweet laughter, Anatol's town. . . . He was saying:

'So you know? Of course you know. Why shouldn't you know? She died. She died. Now you know all there is to know, Anna Perenna. I'm glad you know. For now you know all there is to know about me. For her agony hasn't redeemed me – it's made me a maimed cad. A spiteful liar. A man too hurt to use his gifts, who takes his shame out in miscalling other men. I'm not a man. I couldn't protect her; I was caught in the Army with the rest. I was so sure as I went strutting about; and, though I call myself a Christian and a Catholic, all the time I see another god, something very old, with a filthy leer who likes hurting people. He's had his joke – he's still having his joke on me.

'But you are not laughing, Anne. . . .' He flung himself forward and

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laid his head down on her knees. Her fingers touched the little drakes' tails of soft hair along the pale cleft of his neck.

\* \* \*

This time it was Alec who sat at Anne's feet, looking up like an affectionate and enthusiastic dog.

'Wonderful the change you've made in Alan. We're doing a Sunday show and you ought to have seen him at rehearsal. Understudied Biron, and again at the last minute had to play. His body doesn't fit, but he made it. The sword and ruff did what they should and often don't, and helped him; and he forgot what he does when he's nervous and goes all stagey – took a flying leap into the part, and you saw little Alan Courcy turn Renaissance lord. It went as though it had been sung. – The young Shakespeare, working up to a hell of a climax – stuck in the rest of the play as an excuse for that outburst – and Alan was his rocket. Going up and bursting out on top with stars. You should have heard him, mounting his speech:—

*"But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,  
Lives not alone immured in the brain . . .  
In valour is not love a Hercules,  
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?"*

– 'And when he came to the persuasive solemn bit at the end:—

*"For women's sake by whom these men are men,"* he spoke it like a gay prayer. His English is naturally very pure. A little pernicketty – after all, he's part French; but when it comes to a show like that and the classic stage, he's got it where he wants it.'

'I wish,' said Anne, 'I'd heard.'

'I wish,' said Alec, 'you had. For,

at the end, my dear, he was praying to you.'

'Not to his memories?'

'Well, it's been you who've treated them so as to make them fit to pray to,' said Alec sturdily. 'Besides, he's told me as much.'

\* \* \*

Again Anne was very pleased, with the appeasement of nerves that comes to many women, aware that through them has come consolation, a certain order and proportion, ability set free. Pleasure that, when Alan came to call and tell her about it himself, came with a sensual stab.

The spring came too with its wave of green fire, and they became lovers. Even, at his suggestion, marriage crossed her mind. His family encouraged her. His mother especially, his French mother, the elegant old lady, anxious, ironical, profoundly observant and attached to her son. Exhausted too, as Anne noticed, with a life-time of dealing with him. Did she understand him? Did she not? Was she *au fond*, wise, or did she suffer from that vanity, that essential blindness of the parent that seems to the lover so shocking and so hopeless? Anne asked herself that, when she saw old Madame de Courcy was as much amused as impressed. Impressed she certainly was and thankful, with even a touch of hope that in itself sounded like a warning. For every time she heard her say: 'Anne, child, what wonders you are doing with my son,' Anne could hear, undertone and overtone, fear and something like derision. A little afraid for herself, she summoned the lover's faith. Again, whatever he was, Alan

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had the trick to make her passionate and to make her laugh, two things sufficient to fly away with judgment, and she knew it.

She was the fountain at which he drank, bathed, adorned himself. With altered step he had begun – she saw it and his mother endorsed it – to ‘*move about the house with joy.*’ Yet she soon noticed one thing – that he never bought her anything but cheap flowers, and these with excuses she did not expect about poverty which she knew, within that range of expenditure, did not exist. And, though he was always at her house, he rarely took her out, and then with the same excuses. It was queer. Then one evening he told her that he was on the track of a sister of the Austrian girl who might still be alive, and putting aside every penny to help her if he could find her. Well and good, but it occurred to Anne that a possible wife could hardly be asked to share for ever such an excess of economy.

And when he spoke of this his voice grew shrill, the small lithe body flung itself about; he would wander about the room from chair to chair, find nowhere to rest. This progress she knew, and that it ended in quiet, his body flung down again at her feet, his head with its soft blown hair come to rest on her lap.

But that evening, after trying the fourth chair, he got up again and, apropos of nothing, cried out: ‘Why should I bring you presents? I know I’m supposed to bring you presents. Convention demands it. I sent her presents, money, all I had. I went without the decencies of the other men in my mess and she never got them.

They never did her any good. You’ve got everything you need. What can I give you? My rotten life to pick up. Fine gift that, my Anna –’

She took this quietly. It seemed to her inevitable that it would come to a struggle between the dead girl and herself. A struggle that, for both their sakes, she must win. That it was fair for her to win. The little Babette would not mind. Was not going to be allowed to mind. She waited till he had done and said:

‘I wish your French logical mind would run through what you’ve been saying. What *are* the parallels? And when did I ask you to give me presents? Only there comes a time – a way – when the dead must bury their dead. It’s the only way to keep them properly alive. Otherwise they’re apt to stink. You say you’re a Christian and a Catholic, and you know our authority for that. Only just look at the sense of what you’re saying. You’re not to give me presents (for which I’ve never asked) because once (under tragic circumstances) you made them to someone else who didn’t get them; all bolstered up with cant about convention and lies about me. Alan, dear –’

‘Anna Perenna sits there, the Moon-Woman, and talks about logic to the Man in the Moon! But I earned that, I admit. Oh! I’m a nasty bit of work. No one knows how nasty –’ He came across, took her by the throat and began to kiss her:

‘Doesn’t she know I must punish her for being so lovely and so wise and for purging the cad out of me?’ As he thrust her back among the cushions, her body began to relax, and he lay beside her, nibbling her lips – ‘Best

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French logic' – and heard her laugh from her throat. Then, in silence, close together, she heard lovely words, murmured but distinct:

*'A la très chère, à la très belle  
Qui remplit nos âmes de clarté –'*

And a moment later, as if to himself: 'Go away Babette, my dear, your time's over.' 'To Paradise,' she whispered, drowsed and trembling at his touch. The long couch in the room where the spring wind stirred held them easily, and his presence shut out everything but the wandering airs and the talk of wood-pigeons high up in the trees.

\* \* \*

A few days later he said: 'Let's go to the Ballet. We must to-night. I've got the seats.' Anne agreed. Before she started she looked at the programme. There was to be a new one, called 'Le Beau Danube'. She remembered what she had heard about it, that it was written round the Danube waltz, with one exquisite heart-breaking *pas de deux* for Lopokova and Massine. (Critics had called it a sentimental return, but those two could never spoil anything.) Then that Alan must know; that he meant them to see it together for a kind of *adieu*, a last salute to the past.

She met him and they went to their seats. They were not very good seats. While a little worm of observation coiled in her mind suggested to her that, if she offered to pay for hers, he would be pleased. So, preparing for some sort of crisis, hoping for a finale or some revision of their relation, she sat quietly until the curtain rose.

There is still power in that sweet

tune to make the shattered children of the after-War world weep. Not because they love like that, or that they would like to love like that. One of the recurrent love-moods of humanity that our society at the moment has no use for and no response. Only, as presented by the two great dancers, one of tears. In that Ballet there is nothing but their dance, when the passionate modulation before the end is worked out by their bodies, in a rapture based on sweetness, based on grief. A voiceless song accompanied them across the empty stage. They were dancing the death of their love, but the song said accompanying: 'This is Vienna's death.' As he lifted her and she mounted in his arms to the passionate air, the heart of the youngest of all ancient cities was broken with their hearts. A dance that lasted ten minutes. It took several years to kill Vienna; several centuries to make Vienna. And all these three times were the same time. Nor are we used, like the ancient world, to the death of cities, who have married civilisation each with a ring of their own, which cannot be made to fit another hand.

It did not seem necessary to compare their thoughts. They sat straight side by side, each in a precinct of pain and of delight. Watching a dance of love, love when it is nearest to death. Death of Vienna. Death of Anatol. Death of Saki's Clovis and Comus Bassington. They were dead. They were dead. Had those dead boys found any Paradise in which to go on playing? (Was it a spoiled Anatol she had sitting beside her?) As the curtain came down, something said 'No' distinctly.

\* \* \*

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The next was the *Boutique Fantastique*. Alan did not want to stay. 'Not after that, Anne, please.' Anne wanted to stay, because she loved the *Boutique*, because it was something like bad discipline to run away, instead of tuning-in to another kind of joy. A better kind perhaps of a very different best. 'Stay and laugh,' she said. She often gave in, but this time she did not want to give in. Or when Alan began to sulk, damn well mean to give in. 'Alan, stay and play.' 'Play!' he cried out, turning his ravaged head: 'my play died with that. Why should I stay? Tell me that.'

She said coolly: 'Because of courage' For a few moments he stared down. 'All right,' he said at last. The curtain rose again. She leaned forward, ready to lose herself. Not quite. Aware from time to time of a fleeting look he gave her. Of the kind a lover would rather not see.

When they had left the theatre he said: 'I wonder how long it will continue to amuse you, going about with a corpse? Can't you see, you blind woman-thing, that I died when that died?'

'The answer is that I should dislike it very much. Only I'm not and you haven't.'

'You're like all women – you only see what you want to see. And what you want with me, God knows? I can't even ask you out to tea. I'm sorry to be so poor, but the tickets cleared me out.'

She knew these pettish fits. At first she had thought to tease him out of them by a cheerful generosity, and for a time it had seemed that she *had* teased him. This afternoon it suddenly palled.

'I am going home to tea. And I'm not going to ask you because it's my housekeeper's day out, and I have to get it myself, and it's such a strain putting an extra teaspoon into the pot. Besides, think of the expense.' The Tube Station was mercifully near. She knew he was hesitating behind her. Would he dash after her as he had sometimes done, and penitent, eager, exceedingly forgivable, laugh at himself? Explain all over again: 'I come all over beastly about money because of *her*. Because she couldn't spend it.' This time he did not follow. She reached home unhappy, vexed at the stab of – worse than pain – of contempt that nagged at love. The love she thought they were making, and which she could never be utterly sure if it were still-born or not.

The tiny crisis passed. It seemed more and more as though she had accepted to marry him. Not that there was any hurry. Then one day they were together at her house when the news came that Alec was ill. It was really bad news. He was going on tour, to play lead. He could not go, and when he recovered he would be out of work. It was possible that if an expensive treatment were given instantly, he might be ready. Anne got out her passbook and looked at it thoughtfully. Did sums. Then asked Alan if he could help to make up the right amount.

'We owe him a bit, *mon ami*. No two people had a better friend. Besides, he is one of the very few who will pay back and pay back quickly.' She had not time to be horribly afraid before she heard Alan saying:

'Twenty pounds? My dear girl, I'm afraid I can't do that.'

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'But, Alan, it's only a loan, and a short one. You've told me your income. You've no real expenses. You're living at home——'

'I'm out of work, if it comes to that.'

'My dear, you could have gone touring with Alec. They wanted you; he wanted you——'

'And leave here – you – this?'

'As you like. But don't call yourself out of a job.' The usual fatuity followed: 'I thought you wanted me to stay.' She made the obvious reply:

'For myself, yes, of course. But for you, and a bit for myself – don't you understand – I want to see you act.'

He said with a sneer:

'And play second lead to Alec.' There was a nasty silence. Then he began to tell her witty stories of life on tour, and left her, promising to go home and see what he could do. Left her reflecting. He had said no more. He *had* changed his tone. Perhaps he had seen for himself what it would mean if he did not help his friend. Anne wrote a cheque for her part, and went out on the far harder business of persuading Alec to take it.

\* \* \*

The next day she went to Kensington, to Alan's house to tea, alone with his mother. A visit now become a custom each week between the old woman and the young. The ritual was that Alan should appear later to take her away, dine with her or take her out to dine. Still Anne could not determine what the old woman thought. Was it her French training, ignoring what she could not

prevent? How far was she in her son's confidence? Were they together – uncomfortable suspicion – using her for a medicine, a cure, a prophylactic against something worse? (Stupid. Of course they were. Exactly how much?)

How much *did* he tell her? Anne smiled and blushed. Well, old Madame de Courcy was the right sort of mother to be told that.

They had tea in the garden. The old lady began cheerfully:

'Alan will tell you when he comes. He won't have had time before. It's sad that your poor friend Alec is so ill, but they've offered Alan his part on tour; and, thanks, my dear, to the way you've encouraged him about his work, he's accepted it. He says too that he's sending Alec something to help pay off his illness.'

Anne stared at the grass. A caterpillar on a blade stood up on its green tail and waved a black head at her. Two worlds, caterpillar world and man world, looking each at the other. Anne thinking man thoughts, the caterpillar caterpillar thoughts. So Alan had sneaked off and stolen Alec's job. (Innocently she was responsible. She had told him about his need and about the tour.) On such conditions the loan she had asked for had been given. Alan would have the work and the pay and the fame, if any. And be paid back the money he had invested, which had obtained him these things. He, the spoiled gentleman actor, too good for this and too gifted for that. The bitterness that is the reverse and the measure and the proportion of love welled up dreadfully in her. The amateur had robbed Alec, Alec who



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gloried in his profession. The profession Alan gloried in being too good for – the fine art of the actor – picking and choosing and turning his back on the mill to which Alec offered his body for a grindstone.

(And how had he got the job? Was that the way the money went? Was it possible? She only knew that anything is possible.)

Madame de Courcy was looking at her:

‘Have I distressed you, child? I mean, do you not want him to go? Of course you don’t, but you’ve always been so sensible and intelligent in wanting him to work; in seeing what his work might do for him. Only it has been a shock, the separation – I see. I have been careless. But if you only knew, my dear, how I have come to rely on your courage. It has not always been too easy to be Alan’s mother –’

(‘Tell her? Tell his mother? Why not? She would not understand by herself, and she’d better. And if she’s a cheat also, I shall know. Those last words of hers sounded sweet. If they were, then she’s worth truth; and if she’ll stand the truth, Alan won’t quite get away with it. . . . Besides, I’m so angry, it’s bound to come out. . . . Lovers can’t be cads. . . . How dare he do that to love?’) Hoping piteously that Madame de Courcy would understand, grimly prepared for an explosion of mother-love, she said:

‘It is not that, *maman*. It is because Alan had no right to do that.’ She explained with her head averted, her eyes on the caterpillar, now gathering itself up, head to tail, in a loop, and

shooting forward its own length, to wave a moment and repeat. Very neatly done. As if, too, it was showing off. Alan liked to show off. ‘*I am a worm and no man.*’ She began to look hard across the garden to a tree, the tree in French called Golden Rain, most beautifully in bloom.

– ‘You see, it takes away one’s respect that he should do a thing like that. And how can one keep love without the honour that goes with it? I mean, I can’t. And forgive me the priggishness.’ To her great comfort, Madame de Courcy’s voice reassured her:

‘I see, my child. Of course I see. Yes, I am glad you have told me. It is as well to face these things.’ Blessed French mind, accepting things as they are; keeping values intact and pure.

– ‘I quite see that he has done wrong. And what it means to you – For you have tried. We have all tried. . . .’ (Anne thought: ‘Even if she would be glad to be rid of me, this woman is honest. Not a touch, thank God, of “my son, right or wrong”.’) She heard her say:

– ‘I think we will speak to him when he comes in. – And yet –’ Their eyes met and both women nodded.

‘You mean, *maman*, that it might put him off acting for ever if he is told not to be a cad and to leave this?’

‘Yes, I fear that. You see, I know – oh, how well I know! – his perverse mind. Presently he will be saying: “You made it a point of honour when I had the best chance in my life that I should not take it.” . . . You can imagine what he would make of that.’

## A Lover

'You are absolutely right. Dear God, how difficult it is –' And from the mother's face she understood what a lifetime of it had been.

'*Réfléchissons-nous*. And what perversity it is again that you should have so stimulated him – for this.'

– 'It has always been like that. From his childhood. – How often I have been unhappy. Feared, too, for the woman who – how do you say it? – should tackle him. But except for *amourettes* with the lower classes and with, shall I say, *grues*, he avoids our sex. Always it must be one who is paid to please.'

Anne sat up sharply. Of course he was that sort. All the horrible things, as is their way, were coming out at once. If she had not been drugged by the Vienna story, she would have known that. Now it was intolerable with what distinctness she could see him making love to a girl of easy virtue from the corner tobacconist. And did he get his cigarettes free? Reaction was making her beastly. He called her Anna Perenna. Moments of exquisiteness flashed back, flashed past. Flying things, coloured and winged, to lie preserved only in the amber of memory. She heard herself saying in a sensible voice:

'While we must always remember the Vienna business. To have lost one's first young love like that. When a thing like that happens, there is always something final about it. Something for which one must have extraordinary patience, extraordinary understanding. After which, heaven help us all, perhaps we can never expect much.' Madame de Courcy interrupted:

'Vienna, my dear, what was that?'

'Why, about the little Elizabeth, about Babette.' ('Perhaps he didn't tell her. That's nonsense. He tells her everything.'

– 'Babette Cosmas he was engaged to and who died so awfully.' ('She is staring at me. This is like finding a person you supposed a Christian hadn't heard of the Crucifixion.') Clearly and distinct she was being answered, plain words within the range of cat and dog and no and yes.

'Babette – bless our hearts – why should he say that she is dead? Or that he was engaged to her? Yes, they were a family we knew very well, in Vienna, just before the War. Charming people – she was a good deal older than he was. He made a few calf's eyes at her as a boy will. Engaged? She was engaged already. Married when we left and managed to spend the War with her baby in Switzerland. They had property there. They managed to get through all right. I still hear from them occasionally.

'Child, you were angry before. Now you are white. What is it? Speak out. We have not kept secrets from one another.'

As Madame de Courcy spoke it seemed as though, instead of trees flowering and new grass and borders opening with flowers, they were sitting in a place that was a desert pocket, full of clean dry stones. In the middle one large stone, like an idol, called The Truth. Why had she been calling the place a garden, when actually it was made of dry stones? Bones among stones. *Can these stones live?* Instead of the heart's desire a stone. All this time she had been serving the image of a love which

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had not been there. The moon had come to Endymion; Endymion had got the moon down under false pretences. After all, the moon is a stone. Who was it called the moon a 'numinous stone'? In the centre of everything, instead of the heart's desire, there is a stone. It then occurred to her that she now saw the stone because she had wished for truth. Truth in love. No love without truth. There was singularly little consolation in it.

'I will tell you the story Alan told us,' she said. 'The story that was his passport, through Alec, to our society. To me most of all. The story we wholly believed.'

She told it, the passion and death of Elizabeth Cosmas. Which had not taken place, whose shadowy and metaphysical existence had so affected her own. Told with its details; the money Alan had sent, the things he had gone without, the money he hoped to send. His mother listened quietly. At the end she said:

'There was no one like that; no one of whom that story could be true. Nor was he in the Army for more than a few months at the end. Clerk's work at some base: his health alone made a commission out of the question. On that account I never suffered the least anxiety. "Then," I remember, Alan said to me once, quoting one of your modern poets: "*I must find a gesture of my own.*"'

'He seems to have done so.' The old woman waited a few moments. Then she said:

'My dear, I have one question to ask you. From you I know I shall hear nothing but the truth. Can you for-

give him? If you do not yet know, say so; but I believe it to be one of the occasions when if you look in your heart you will know the answer.' Anne did not hesitate at all: all anger apart, the mother was quite right. She knew the answer, as if it were prepared for her.

'No', she said.

'I understand. With you it is inevitable.' Anne nodded. The old woman stared down the garden, in which she also saw no more flowers.

'It is not necessary for me to say that I am sorry that my son has done this to you.'

'Done it to love. If I stayed till he came and we taxed him——' Anne went on staring; both women thinking the words he would say: 'I'm glad you've found me out. I'm glad I've been exposed to you. Now you know exactly and for keeps how vile I am.' Roll himself in his poisoned shirt, till she too was fiery with the prick of his disease. Now there was just time to escape. No gifts at home to remind her. Half an hour would purify her house of the memory of him.

She picked up her long gloves. No need to hurry. The gods had this in hand, and she had already escaped him.

'Good-bye, Madame de Courcy. Thank you for all your *gentillesse* to me.' She walked across the green grass which had turned to stones.

'What am I leaving her alone with in this garden? Something she did not know before. Thrown him back on her? I had to. Leave him to her. What have I to face — some pain and more shame? But if she were not his mother, she would no more forgive him than I do.'

# The Applied Science of the Next Hundred Years

## Biological and Social Engineering

by Julian Huxley

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IN the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, those who wrote about the future concerned themselves mainly with the reform of human institutions. They saw the evils inflicted by tyrannical, ambitious, or merely stupid monarchs, or by a corrupt priesthood, and they thought that if they could but remove tyrants and priests, the resultant liberty would solve the problems of humanity. When they reflected further, they evinced a touching faith in the perfectibility of human nature: simply provide humanity with universal education in the shape of knowledge, useful art, and moral precept, and humanity would automatically grow up wise, capable and virtuous . . .

Later, during the heyday of the industrial period, the tone changed. Visionaries began to think of the future more in terms of increased control over nature. If only men could learn to fly, to travel under water, to communicate at a distance, to store up pictures and sounds and movement, as in camera, phonograph and cinema, to have an ample and varied supply of

power and food and raw materials, to stamp out the germs of disease, to make this or that concrete achievement, all would be well.

Both these hopes were falsified. Liberty from tyrants has given us the tyranny of democracy with its vote-catching and its political bosses. In place of religious persecution we have the liberty to believe any nonsense whatsoever. Universal education has demonstrated one fact above all—that the majority of people are not capable of profiting adequately by the education with which they are provided. The marvellous inventions of the last hundred years have made life more varied and interesting, but also more complicated and more difficult.

Most striking of all, at the end of a single century of time which has done more to effect the control of nature than had the two thousand years before it, the world is in a mess of more than ordinary magnitude. The ills that affect civilization to-day do not come from outside; they derive from man himself. Nobody can accuse a jealous God or a wicked Devil or

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even a grudging Mother Nature of producing scarcity when there is an unexampled excess of all foodstuffs and raw materials, or hardship when every kind of convenience and luxury can be easily manufactured. In economic affairs, it is the economic machine erected by man himself which has got out of hand. We know the causes of disease, yet permit insanitary habits and quack medicines. We know perfectly well that armaments, high tariffs, and over-population are injurious, yet allow the spirit of nationalism to keep them all going. And so on and so forth.

What I foresee in the near future is the rise of a new branch of applied science which for want of a better term we may call biological and social engineering. Rule-of-thumb methods combined with a little common-sense and energy made it possible for men to bridge a ten-foot stream or construct a simple hut. But to produce structures like a modern skyscraper or the Washington Bridge, expert knowledge and calculation is required. Long years of experimentation and testing must have gone into the production of standardized materials, whose precise tensile and compressional strength is known, whose margin of safety can be calculated. Mathematicians must have worked out formulæ for the stresses and strains in the different parts of different kinds of bridges and buildings. Technicians must have been trained in the employment of various special methods and materials. The engineer-architect must be educated so as to be able to apply the stores of tested knowledge to the particular problem in hand. Without

scientific knowledge of materials, rigorously tested theoretical calculation, and skilled technique, no achievement of modern engineering would be possible.

We, however, are still attempting to apply pre-scientific methods to the organization of modern society. Such hit-or-miss, rule-of-thumb, and vague abstract principles worked well enough when man's affairs were on a smaller scale. But to-day, when all the world is interlocked and the tempo of life has been enormously speeded up, they are not only inadequate but dangerous: there is always the risk that the structure will collapse as result of its own ill-regulated growth.

Let us try to see what are some of the lines along which we could develop a true science of biological and social engineering. In the first place, we must have a scientific knowledge of the material which we have to employ – in other words, human nature. The earliest ages worked by pure rule-of-thumb. The Egyptian kings and priests had not worked out any elaborate formula for inducing the bulk of the population to irrigate and cultivate and build temples and pyramids for their benefit: they just found that under a certain political and religious system they could successfully do so. Later, abstract general principles were introduced. These are of two main sorts – principles of equality and principles of inequality. Principles of inequality attempt to justify the exploitation of one human type by another. Many Dutch South Africans justified their exploitation of the native population by reference to the Bible and its remarks about the

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children of Ham. The ordinary attitude of a conquering white race to a coloured race whose territory it has invaded is guided by the belief that coloured people are automatically inferior. The attitude of the rich to the poor in early nineteenth century Britain was based on the assumption that the poor were by their very nature ignorant and depraved and so destined to poverty. The current superstition in Anglo-Saxon and German countries about the inevitable superiority of the Nordic stock and the feeling in the United States about the inherent inferiority of 'alien immigrants' are all examples of such principles.

Principles of equality, on the other hand, were laid down in the American Constitution and the French Revolution. They make the sweeping assertion that all men are born equal. However much dishonoured in practice, they have had enormous influence in shaping political forms of democracy all over the world.

To the scientific eye, such general principles are miserably inadequate. What is needed is accurate tested measurement. Such measurements, of physique, temperament, intelligence, constitutional proneness to disease, vocational aptitudes, special gifts, are now being made on a large scale. The methods of measurement are still far from perfect: but already we are beginning to see certain concrete generalizations emerging. In the first place, far from all mankind being born equal, there is a very great diversity in the outfit of possibilities which they receive at birth. But secondly, far from whole classes or

nationalities or races being intrinsically inferior or superior, each such group has a great range of difference within itself. There may be differences of *average* between groups, but even a group with marked belief in its own superiority will always have a large percentage of men and women who are inferior to the better products of the groups which it professes to despise.

Such scientific measurement of human nature is just beginning to find successful application in certain spheres, notably in industrial psychology, in education, and in the administration of justice. Children leaving school after having their various aptitudes measured, can be given valuable guidance as to their future vocation. Applicants for industrial posts can be selected not merely on looks or letters of recommendation, but partly on the results of their performance of various tests. Not all workers are equally liable to industrial accidents: it is now becoming possible to forecast, though still only roughly, the differing liability of different people to have accidents happen to them.

In education, physical measurements and medical examination often reveal some cause – in defective eyesight or hearing, adenoids or bad teeth, or merely in defective feeding – for poor class-work; while intelligence tests often give help in assessing the true ability of children. Similarly, psychological tests in courts of justice are being more and more widely used to help judges decide what treatment a prisoner shall receive, to prevent stupidity or feeble-mindedness being punished as if it were wickedness, and high spirits

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receiving the same treatment as brutality.

But this is only a beginning. At the moment we still tend to think of education as the forcing of a set of facts and rules and ready-made ideas upon all alike; of a job as simply a contract to work for so many hours for so much pay; of prisons as places in which to dump and punish a special brand of human beings known as criminals; and so on.

As the idea of biological engineering spreads, attention will be focussed more and more upon the development of the personality. Anyone with any knowledge of psychology realizes how intensely complicated is the business which we all must go through with, of developing from infancy through childhood and adolescence to adult life and maturity, and how very badly it is bungled in most lives. If we could *see* minds and souls as we can see bodies, we should be appalled at the spectacle of our modern so-called civilized humanity. The great majority of minds would be seen to be of stunted growth, a large proportion to be distorted or crippled in one way or another, and a not inconsiderable number would appear definitely monstrous.

We know that a great deal of this mangling and dwarfing of souls is the result of the events of childhood, but we are only just beginning to work out ways and means for preventing this waste. Often the parents are at fault – sometimes through harshness or coldness, sometimes through over-indulgence, sometimes through complicated blends of egotism and jealous affection.

We can be pretty sure that fifty years hence a much more scientific

technique will have been worked out for ensuring the smooth and rich growth of the young personality, without saddling it with inferiority complexes, mother-fixations, unconscious repressions, over-sensitive or over-harsh consciences, irrational pervading fears, and all the other incubi that now too often beset it. We can also be pretty sure that parents will no longer be allowed such freedom or such ignorance in bringing up their children. Whether there will be compulsory schools for parents, or inspection of homes, or whether a great deal more of the child's early life will be spent under the supervision of experts, it is impossible to say; but the State will assuredly not allow the present waste of latent possibilities and energies to continue, any more than it now allows people freedom to spread infectious disease.

Nor will it allow the waste of possibilities engendered by the fitting of square human pegs into round holes of jobs, nor the casual falling in and out of work which is so devastating to the morale of the worker. Biological engineering will begin with the premiss that human beings are the most valuable asset of a nation, and human development the most important process of manufacture, with an elaborate technique to be mastered.

The technique is all the more elaborate since mass - production methods alone will not serve: human beings need also to be treated as individuals, with individual methods. This applies not only to early upbringing and the choice of a job, but also to school education, to medical treatment, and to leisure activities.

Fifty years ago electrical engineer-

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ing was in its infancy: it would have been impossible for the most valiant of prophets to have foreseen the state of affairs to-day – the complexity of electrical machinery, the new types of electrical action that have been discovered, the laboratories and colleges given over to research and teaching in the subject, the permeation of everyday life by electrical appliances. It is equally impossible to-day to prophesy the exact future of the infant science of biological engineering as applied to the development of individual lives: but it is certain that here too vast reserves of power will be tapped and brought under control, and that everyday existence will be permeated and transformed by the results achieved.

When we leave the individual for the population, the scientific engineering spirit is equally necessary. Primitive societies usually kept their numbers roughly constant by rule-of-thumb methods concerning marriage, sex-abstinence, abortion, or infanticide. If they multiplied rapidly, they were either killed off by disease or hunger, or overflowed to conquer fresh territory. Then came the period of abstract principles. Adam Smith, the great pioneer of modern economics, laid it down as self-evident that the first test of a successful country was a steadily increasing population: and this idea is still at the back of most men's minds. Precisely the opposite view was set forth by Malthus – that poverty and misery were automatically produced by increase in population: and this is held as an axiom by many supporters of the birth-control movement.

Again, however, neither view is correct. The truth is that for any par-

ticular level of scientific and technological attainment and each particular social and economic system, there exists an optimum level of population. The United States of America to-day would obviously be under-populated if they had ten million inhabitants, and equally obviously over-populated if they contained a thousand million.

At the moment, although our scientific knowledge would enable us to feed and care for a much larger population than now exists, yet our economic system has rendered the capitalist world temporarily incapable of dealing with its present population. Until we can discover some way of restoring purchasing power and social usefulness to the millions thrown out of work by the improvement of machinery, we shall be over-populated.

Meanwhile, there is the opposite danger. Birth-control is spreading so fast that the population of many nations will shortly begin to go down. In all the industrial countries of Western Europe it will begin to go down within twenty years; even in the United States, unless something quite unforeseen occurs, population will reach its turning-point within forty or fifty years. It may go down much too fast even for our present type of social organization: and if in the meantime we have reformed that system, we may find the civilized world much under-populated – and this just at a time when the black and brown population of countries like Africa and South America will in all probability be rapidly going up.

The remedy for this is to make the regulation of the number of people in the world the object of scientific study and control. Instead of pretending



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that birth-control does not exist, or of denouncing it as unnatural or obscene, or of lauding and encouraging it as always desirable, we must accept its widespread practice as a fact, and see whether it cannot be used in the interests of society.

It will be realized that the population can be adjusted to economic systems as well as the economic system adjusted to population. The pressure of population will no longer be regarded as an excuse for a country to embark on a career of conquest. In addition to an International Population Bureau attached to the League of Nations or whatever substitute for the League will then exist, every civilized country will doubtless have a Department of State devoted to population problems, and birth-control clinics, properly supervised, will form a very important branch of the Public Health Service.

But it is impossible to consider the quantity of population apart from its quality. Some people are born talented, others are born morons; some inherit a healthy constitution, others inherit deformity or liability to disease. The United Kingdom would be a very different place from what it is to-day if its average level of intelligence were that of the stupidest 10 per cent. of its population – and very different also if it were that of the ablest 10 per cent.

The social engineer will first have to realize that the average quality of populations can and does change. For one thing, it changes by emigration: through emigration, Ireland has undoubtedly lost an undue proportion of types possessed of initiative and the

love of adventure, just as has the English countryside through the drift to the cities. It changes by immigration: the American population has changed its character through the preponderance, in the decades before the War, of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. But most of all it changes by differential reproduction. The French-Canadian stock has been rapidly spreading westwards in Canada because of its higher birth-rate. During the nineteenth century the whole face of Western Europe was altered because the English and the Germans multiplied faster than the French. At the present moment, in all the countries of Western civilization there are strong indications that subnormal stocks are multiplying faster than talented stocks.

In the second place, social engineering will have to take account of the fact that changes both in the quantity and the quality of a population are closely linked with the economic and social system of the country. Dr. R. A. Fisher has recently pointed out the very important (and also very depressing) fact that any system which, like ours, is based on commercialism and individual competition, is biologically bad, because it automatically leads to a decrease of fertility among the more successful members of society. Qualities making for success are progressively sterilized, generation after generation; the effect is cumulative, so that after a few centuries the average of intelligence and initiative is seriously reduced. The collapse of older civilizations like the Roman, the Arab, the Spanish, may well be due in large part to this cause.

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The social engineer will have to set himself to think very hard about ways and means to prevent disaster, by counteracting such tendencies. When taxation schemes are put forward, they must be considered not only from the point of view of balancing the budget, and for their effect upon industry, but also for their effect upon reproduction. At the moment, for instance, there is no doubt that high income tax is reducing the number of children precisely in those stocks in which the birth-rate ought to be kept up.

In the same way a policy of free education for the mass of the people but of high educational costs for the professional classes has an effect upon later generations which is the reverse of eugenic.

Again, a flat wage-rate for all, whether single or married, with or without children, has really the effect of putting a premium upon childlessness. Just as birth-control practice and propaganda must be looked after by society if over-population is to be prevented, so, to guard against a rapid decrease of population, society will have to take charge of economic measures which will encourage larger families when and where necessary. Perhaps some large-scale and drastic system of family allowances will be put into action. Perhaps the capitalist system itself will be altered by reducing the individual profit motive (as has already been brought about in Russia, though by methods which seem not to be suited to the Western world).

In any case, social engineering will be very busy over problems with which society to-day has hardly begun to

concern itself – the effects of business and government and education and public health, in a word, of all economic and social measures, upon the quantity and quality of the race. Complementary to the Department of Population, we shall doubtless see established a Racial Health Service on equal terms with the present Public Health Services (which, be it remembered, are themselves of very recent growth).

I spoke earlier of optimum population. This leads on to all kinds of questions of scale. Scale is vital in engineering. The stresses and strains are quite different in two bridges of identical plan but of different absolute size. Size may have a limit. For instance, the proportion of elevator-space needed in a skyscraper increases with the number of stories, until finally – unless new methods of vertical transport are discovered – it becomes uneconomical to build any higher, even though mechanically it may be quite possible. The same is true in biology: no land animal with a bulk anywhere near that of a whale could exist: above a weight of ten tons or so, increased size becomes a handicap.

We need to apply this principle in social engineering. Is it really economical to encourage cities to grow indefinitely to five millions – ten millions – a hundred millions? Is large-scale mass-production in industry a universal magic formula, or is it only suited to certain kinds of goods? It appears, for instance, that the canning of vegetables and fruit can be carried out more economically, and with results of higher quality, if done in moderately small units close to local

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sources of supply than in huge factories which must draw their raw materials from a huge area. Again, when invention is rapid, a small automobile factory may be more flexible in improving its models than one built on such a vast scale of mass-production that the cost of any change is prodigious.

This kind of problem is of course already being considered by the more foresighted leaders of thought and industry as an aspect of what it is fashionable to speak of as Planning. Whatever else of good or bad the Russian Revolution may have achieved, it has succeeded in putting across the idea of large-scale planning. We can be sure that the Russian Five-Year Plan will be succeeded by long-range plans of various sorts in all the civilized countries of the world.

Political and Economic Planning, in fact, is one very important aspect of social engineering. A great deal of nonsense has been talked about planning in the last few years, but the important fact is that it is being talked about at all; for this means that people are at last waking up to the realization that political and economic systems will not work of themselves, but need as much hard thought and hard work and conscious planning as does the building and marketing of a new type of automobile, the successful accomplishment of a piece of scientific research, or the construction of a hydro-electric plant.

Planning will doubtless first take effect in economic affairs: but without doubt it will eventually invade the political sphere. Already in Russia there is a State Department of Planning: doubtless other countries will

follow suit. As a further effect of the application of the scientific spirit to affairs, we may prophesy the disappearance of the politician as we now know him. By the year A.D. 2000, doubtless no one will be allowed to meddle in politics without long training and passing severe tests, and to be a politician will mean possessing as high a professional standard as that of a qualified medical man to-day.

What I want chiefly to emphasize, however, is that planning, in the sense in which that word is generally used to-day, is not enough. It is extremely important to town-plan our cities, to rationalize our industries, to guard against exaggerated slumps and booms in the domain of finance, to make provision, through co-operative marketing, production quotas, import regulations, and what not, for a steady flow of agricultural products and a healthy farming industry, to adjust our currency to a flexible world-system, and so on. But this alone is only one aspect of biological and social engineering.

In the long run it is equally important to plan for education, for health, for self-development in adult life, for the intelligent use of the steadily increasing amount of leisure which will be available in a planned society, for quantity of population, for racial improvement.

In the Greek myth, Prometheus suffered martyrdom at the hands of Zeus because he had given man control over nature by bringing down fire from heaven. To-day, mankind as a whole is suffering the fate of Prometheus; but its sufferings are self-inflicted. Some people lay the blame

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at the door of science with its discoveries and inventions and urge a return to a more primitive simplicity. The real trouble, however, is that we have been scientific in some of our affairs but not in others. The cure for the ills of the scientific age is not less science, but more science. And the science that is most needed at the moment is that of biological engineering.

# Lotus Land

by H. J. Massingham

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I HAVE always suspected that to be a castaway on Lotus Land would be a fate as penal as the more orthodox one of being cribbed in a dungeon, or, in contemporary usage, a concentration camp. A land where it is always afternoon, which everybody knows to be the most tedious part of the day, is a province of Avalon where falls not rain or snow . . . and Avalon is a more up-to-date equivalent of Elisium, which in its turn was descended from the sky-world of the Egyptians, governed by the sun-god. Perhaps this was the reason why the Hades of the ancient world was so well watered by rivers – to this day I remember the old tag about the six rivers of hell – and it was the sun-god who supplanted Osiris, the spirit of water, the deity of the Nile, and dumped him in the Underworld. The imagination of the western world became dominated by the idea of paradise as a cloudless land over which, with the regularity of a bus route, day after burning day rode the imperial tyrant in his chariot of fire.

Actually, it was a base ingratitude for our own poets to borrow the classical conception in displaying the sweets of their Avalons and Lotus Lands. The English school of Nature Poetry, justly more celebrated and longer lived than that of any other

country, is pre-eminently a *genius loci*: it takes its inspiration from England and it is Osiris, not Ra, water and not sun, which has made England what it is. Before he applied the gold paint, Tennyson had to dip his brush in Styx. The prodigal hedge-rows, the shining flowers, the enamelled meads, the singing birds, the gardens of delight, this poets' playground has been the gift of clouds, and in England the sun has always behaved as a constitutional monarch should behave and not at all like a despot of the East. There is not a blade of grass in England which does not bear witness to that truism. When the poet reclines upon a couch of them and gazes heavenwards towards bright Phœbus in his strength, dreaming the while of that other Eden where his face is rarely as in this demi-one obscured, he forgets Osiris, the life-giver, whom Ra to our infinite benediction exiled to this land of mists. It is a fact of history that when Ra ascended the throne of Egypt, her annals became dark with blood and turbulence, fierce with predatory desires, and as was the sky-god to the land, so became the Pharaoh to his people.

So much English poetry and perhaps something of the mysticism of English thought and of the more endearing quality of English character

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have been born of those mists that I want to try and prefigure what is to become of the English soul now that the England of Vaughan and Keats and Wordsworth has perished. Something is happening to us because of a new terror from the air, a terror less violent and catastrophic than that threatened by vultures of metal to tear our living flesh, but more insidious and, because it affects our relationship to nature and the unfathomable mysteries behind nature, it may be more deadly. What man has made of man and, yet worse, intends to do with man, makes and promises to make a tragic enough chronicle. But it is not one which need logically affect our sense of association with the cosmic mind, which not only rejoices in order and beauty and their universal validity, but informs the human mind with a conception of them. Our English genius has with few breaks been prone to approach this ultimate unity through nature, which means that province of nature functioning under English skies, a nature totally unlike that sovereign among the plains of India or the highlands of Peru. Whether our insular view is tenable or not, we do think of universals by way of the medium we are familiar with, and that medium is the nature expressed in terms of English skies and English soil and all that grows and creeps and runs thereon and flies above it. That nature possesses its own peculiar form of beauty, and it is likewise one which has been warm to our visions, benevolent to our labours and friendly to our daily lives. Fanatical neither in summer nor winter, it has by its moderation in all things set us an example of tolerance

and so of understanding. Its graces have been more congenial to the poetic mind than the splendours that accompany frenzy and havoc. When Enobarbus praised the infinite variety of the eastern queen, he personified the native quality of English days and years. Its very caprices have been the source of our privileges and blessings, and by a perpetuity of contrasts and transitions between them we have been enabled to avoid that monotony which sours good into evil. Thus, though it grieved the heart of Wordsworth to reflect upon what man has made of man, he could authentically turn from a spectacle so melancholy to thoughts made greener by the living world about him.

This was the English nature and the English weather, nurse of poets, consolation to all but those from whom towns and machines had stolen their birthright, which, but a very short while ago, have abandoned us, whether to return in our life-times no man can surely say. In palæolithic times the Sahara was the most fertile belt of North Africa. If a similar and sinister aridity is beginning to steal upon our grass-green oasis in the western seas, it will be with profounder fears and more to lose than meat and drink that we shall scan the heavens, like the primitive hunters who watched their game retreating and lay down to sleep, footsore and parched from a quest for water more intent than for herds. For eighteen months the climate whose unstable moods nourished us whole, body and mind, has yielded to a despotism of frost and wind followed by sun and wind. It has imposed a uniformity upon us such as in the

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social and political sphere prostrates the spirit of men on the mainland of Europe.

It is only the countryman who knows how radical is the change from the time before the English sun became a tyrant on the Persian model and robbed of their powers his parliament of clouds. He remembers how, in May, bardic lord of the months, the fields that should have worn the dress of 'glad light grene,' so diaphanously fresh and gay that they repeated the ancient hymn of the resurrection of life, those Renaissance meadows which had never failed us from Chaucer to Bridges, carried the rusty look of harvest. Looking over those sere fields, unrefreshed by winter rains or April showers, he saw a thousand poems die. In early June he walked by hedges choked in dust, among wild flowers half their length of stem and span of petal, past ashes with many a bare bough, oaks with their bronzy fine new leaves strangled at the birth. Before the year had reached its zenith, he strode on marshy land seamed as though by an earthquake and hard and dour under his feet as the road he had left. The reeds that once clothed the dry watercourses with their lustrous blades were dead or dying. At mid-summer I walked along a lane that on one side was still fed by a trickle from a spring on the hill. Here the vegetation was normal and so to my eyes a Bacchanal of growth because it reminded me of something we have lost. But the other side, being solely dependent upon rainfall, showed the grasses withered before seeding and even the cleavers had stopped climbing. There were buttercups on one side of the

lane, only their leaves on the other. Even the nettles had lost all but their top leaves and stood with ragged pennons under bare poles. The embankment was infected and all the countryside seemed to ache with a sense of calamity. Though the incorrigible optimist declared that the shortage of water meant less for the beer and so they would make it stronger, another voice, if the wit was a little clouded, was more representative: 'Oh, isn't it dreadful, this drouth! I dig in the garden and the soil's like cinders and there isn't enough suction even for the poor worms. I can't think what we've done to upset the Lord.' The price of livestock began to fall so heavily in the market since the heat had sucked the goodness out of the grass that the farmers said, 'we shall soon be able to buy a cow at Woolworth's.' When the bleached bents were piled and shaped into ricks, they were as slippery as ice, and the men could hardly keep their feet. Came a gust of wind and the air was thick with chaff.

What the farmer has suffered in sapless and starveling crops, exhausted and contaminated springs, sheep and cattle that turn his thoughts to Pharaoh's dream, and labour diverted from the fields to the endless burden of carting water from the sinking rivers; what the labourer has suffered in the more precarious conditions of his service and the grudging responses to his toil; what the country-lover has suffered in looking out over England's no longer green and pleasant land — these griefs have been perhaps less poignant than the gardener's. He gathered peas that were old before

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their coming of age, wizened and yet but just swelling, the first peas of the year that tasted like the last. Like little old men they were, yet childish; infants, but worn out with suns. His lettuces shot to harvest, his beans failed to set their bloom or went to fibre faster than he could pluck them, his roots and tubers were flaccid with malnutrition, and his cabbages windowed with black fly. His seedlings either pined away or rushed to a hectic fruition weeks before their appointed date. Their growth sliced across that slow curve of ascension and decline on which the collaboration of sun and rain bestowed the true rhythm of ripening.

But the fate of his flowers struck him more closely. His annuals made inches for their customary feet and bounded into seed at a time when former years would have been fostering their buds. So brief were the successive dynasties of plants that their histories resembled those of the Roman and Persian Empires at their most convulsive periods. His delphinium spires, that were wont to maintain a glowing city of blues and mauves and lavenders for an enchanted stay of six weeks, after three days required the knife. The red hot poker had gone ashen at its base before its apex had come into flower. The perfection of the rose became a dream of the past. When it unwrapped its tender linen, its edges were bitten away by fly and earwigs, and in less than a morning it was overblown. The doctor – for all gardeners become medical officers – who could contrive with a plant of his to flower a week was taking honours in horticulture. The very bees were stupefied

by starvation, and lay inert in the flower-cups until they were lifted out of them. Only a select few of the thousands of modern species of cultivated plants had ever experienced a persecution from the elements so relentless and unrespite. The rainless and frenzied winds not merely snapped their stems, broke off their heads, loosened their roots and dried up the dryness of the soil; often in their most berserk mood they tore the seedlings out of the ground and sent them bowling along the grass. The teachers in the schools forgot to tell the children that it is a controlled and tempered sun which is the fount and inspiration of life. In all the records of archaic nations kinged by the sun-god, a something maleficent, cruel and war-like appears in their annals as soon as he becomes the pantheon's dictator. So it has happened with our English sun, once the mildest of monarchs who blessed his land as much by his absence as by his State occasions on the throne. No sooner had he come to take the kingly business more seriously than blessings were bleached into curses. The creator was transformed into the acquisitive egoist. His greed dragged flower after flower from its sheath and immediately threw them away for others, as Cambyses forced his dancing girls to gyrate and gesture before him until they were carried away unconscious. The Phoebus of the madrigalists has thrown away his lyre and loosed his arrows from their quiver. Never was there in England a robber who so dissipated the treasures of the earth, losing by his very lust more than he would have gained by more persuasive manners. So he would blanch the roses of their



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colour before they were well in bloom, and suck up the deeper moisture of the soil with a greed that deprived him of his richer prey of flowers. No longer in this foreign country of England do any but fools bless the sun. The gardener will think of other flowers the tyrant cannot hurt – the tortoiseshells that pulse their wings upon the stone-crop and the goldfinches that flutter upon the cornflower heads to peck their untimely seeds. They, too, are flowers that vanish, but not into death.

Science warns us fallible laymen against anthropomorphizing the natural world, a pictorial trick which is such a boggy to the scientific method that in its turn it almost personifies the evil thing as the Scarlet Woman of its creed. Fortunately for the colour of life, the human mind is so incorrigibly dramatic as to take very little notice of this particular scientific commination. Having deified or demonized, humanized or allegorized natural phenomena and natural forces for at least five thousand years, it will not be pedagogy which will get us out of the habit. And the way things have happened in the recent revolution of English weather has made it almost impossible for even the most dispassionate of students not to make an heroic tragedy of it. Our human emotions are too deeply engaged in watching the transformation of our traditional England that it appears sheer penury of imagination to adopt the scientific temper in recording it. We have realized as never before in the vanished days of equable alternations between heat and chill, sun and rain, whose very fickleness was a democratic defence against tyranny, how radically

our fears and desires, not to mention our livelihood, were involved in what has seemed to us so unnatural a uniformity. Because we are not used and so resigned to it, what an eager new interest is begotten for us out of the pageantry of clouds! Bitter experience has discovered for us that they are nearly always only bags of wind. Yet a cloud has become an event, a holiday from the monotony of a blue heaven and a respite, if a pitifully inadequate one, from our efforts to mitigate the fiery torment upon our vegetation. We are so tired of seeing the sun go down like a piece of gold plate put away from a manorial dinner that we accord a freshened welcome to that variety of sky which streaks the baleful rays into thin sheetings of beaten metal, or cuts up the sky into an archipelago bosomed in an ocean, calm as the seas of the Fortunate Isles. At least our Lotus Land looks more graphic thus than wilting beneath the recurrent theme of blue and gold. Or when the cumulus clouds were billowed into monster masses, we would feel ourselves in the presence of a mighty Byzantine architecture, plumed with Oriental influences. True, Pelion piled upon Ossa meant nothing but showmanship, and soon the gorgeous palaces came toppling down like Troy Town and left not a wrack behind. Still, it was spectacle, and it did suggest that the devouring sun was not having it entirely his own way. The sight of a lowering black cloud with its sullen roll and heavy contours became more to us in the pleasure of the eyes and faint hopes of what it might bring us than months of fabular blue. We have looked to see the skies embattled as

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the burning days have made us long  
for night: —

‘O Stars and Dreams and Gentle Night,  
O Night and Stars return!  
And hide me from the hostile light  
That does not warm, but harm.’

Our flawless skies have not only been a menace, they have been like a picture by Marcus Stone, hung in perpetuity over the mantelpiece.

Whatever the meteorological causes which have banished rain, the greatest benefactor of our history, from this island — and one suspects that the official diviners know as little about them as we do — it has been plain enough how the process works. As one observes it tiresomely re-enacted over longer or shorter intervals, the anthropomorphic faculty takes inevitable command. Some wandering Imp, prowling after mischief, espied this crystal of the west. Envyng the green fields, the springing multi-coloured flowers, the fat kine and abundant pastures, the myriad gems which the kindly skies hung from every blade and leaf of their well-beloved, the Imp resolved to make his quarters in the land, choosing as his main citadel that particular fragment of it where I happen to live. The clouds, as is their English way, brought their wonted fleets and caravans from sea to shore and from shore to the expectant countryside. No sooner has the Imp intelligence that the procession is on the way than at once he looses his Storm Troopers, the winds, upon it. The willing clouds do their utmost against this savage onslaught. They brood longingly, they send reinforcements, they may even succeed in dis-

charging a fraction of their precious cargo, which is our very life. Time and again have I seen this same battle joined, the earth darkened under the elemental strife, the cloud-breakers massed into one cumulative charge and the lightning flickering from corner to corner of the heavens. But times without number the issue is the same, the winds prevail, the clouds are dispersed into straggling fugitives and no rain falls. The winds are too highly disciplined both to respond to the Impish summons and to fall with irresistible fury upon the columns of relief. Sometimes the latter are so heavy-laden with blessings that the whole sky sags with the burden of them, and is nothing but a vast grey sack of treasure. But the wind is too much for them. Battering the wretched trees, levelling all more delicate growths, making the whited bents of the field hiss under its speed and howling like a true minister of the Imp, it leaps pardlike at the sky. The slow starvation begins again, the blighting and the mildewing, the fevered flowering and the swift decay, until the green thought in a green shade, that most English of thoughts, becomes to us nothing but a gleam from the literature of escape.

Where I live it has not rained consecutively for three hours more than once in a twelvemonth. But very rarely, and by a kind of desperation, the clouds have broken through this devilish conspiracy and, hurriedly dropping their balm, have departed in undignified haste. Once, the benedictive shower lasted for seventeen seconds and once for nine seconds. But I retain a tenacious memory of a

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time when it rained for a quarter of an hour without stopping. I happened to be in a country pub listening to one of the company giving his reminiscences of an old fellow who 'played contra-bass in the orchester' and, as he added, 'reared up the notes like fried bread' Suddenly we all heard a queer rustling, a susurrant as of poplar leaves hitting against one another. I went out into the porch and the fantastic thought that had sprung to my mind was verified – it was raining! I stood in the porch and drank in the heavenly sight, but still more the heavenly smell of it. Not all the congregated flowers in all the nurseries could have wafted a scent so poignant-sweet. The pleasure those falling drops gave me was so intoxicating that it was like all the joys of my near fifty springs rolled up into one ball. From some cob-webbed corner of my memory I be-thought me of lines that had lain neglected for perhaps a score of years, but at that moment rose up from their trance: –

'To Mary Mother praise be given  
That sends the gentle rain from  
heaven!'

I had only a road and the hedge beyond it to look at, and at the fag-end of day, listless, rheumatic with excess of sun, and yet it assumed the clarity, the honeyed freshness and childlikeness of a scene from Chaucer. When I returned to the tap-room, the whole company was transfigured. Tongues wagged freely, men laughed, we stood each other pints, our faces shone and with something more than visions of swollen peas, hopeful marrows, the bravery of beans and onions for once

rewarded and of the thirsting hay, for as one of us truly said, 'if there's no hay, there's nothing for nobody.' We talked rain, rain, rain, like a lot of children let out of school. We rose to the top of life like corks, there was a head upon our spirits. We were swept away into a common, a universal rejoicing, knowing that all good countrymen rejoiced with us, all beasts and birds and every living thing that once was green. For those few minutes the blade of sedge, the dangling pea-pod, the proud lily, the lean heifer and the grass it fed on, weed and flower and the snail that lived on both, man and mouse, were united in an organ-crash of sympathies. Did Sassoon write, 'Everybody' or 'Everything suddenly burst out singing'? he was a great poet if it was the latter. Then it was all over, the magic moment, the clouds rolled away and the dull, the deadly dull, serenity of the azure vault was restored. The Imp's discomfiture was brief. The burning earth licked up every drop and still that aged and wrinkled face seemed to gasp for more. The next day, the inches-wide fissures in the lawn, the ashen touch and appearance of the soil, the yellowing basal leaves of the plants, the seared grass, the pinched annuals, the head-long seeding – all were as they had been before the relief stores had reached us. It was many a long day before the Imp was caught napping again, and by that time nothing less than the Biblical flood could have saved the year.

If this alien weather seemed to the countryman's harassed mind to act with an unpitying hostility, and the hot winds that accompanied it to be

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driven by a vindictive savagery, it did not mean that they conferred no beauty upon us. Nothing endured its cruel ordeal better than the winter-sown corn, feeding with its root-fibres below the drought level. But every semblance of warm blue-green was drawn out of the straw of the loaded heads of wheat, so that it shone among the foothills a dazzling whitish gold, with the oats a waxier softer sheen beside them, and whiter still. I stepped out on to the terrace one night to see all the fields about me alabaster under a thick blanket of fallen snow. The illusion was complete, but actually the effect was caused by the lifeless bents having been drained of their sap by extreme and prolonged aridity. Early in May, before the grasses were blanched, the maddened winds would turn the meadows into an angry sea of green with the tips of the blades flashing like foam, the crests billowing and drifts of spray flying as the wind veered. The tossing manes of the grasses rushed in successive waves over the green sea, dashing against the hedge-row, but ever restlessly renewed. Never, again, have I known such a year for apple-blossom, for hawthorn and chestnut bloom, and for such a profusion of keys hanging from the ashes. Such prodigality was utterly dissimilar from the shy revelations and delicate intimacies of English country. Magnificent ostentation as it was, it was little more than that, for the trees were soon smitten with blight, eld and exhaustion, the hedges gaped with spindlery growths and the fruit-trees were raped of their harvest by the ferocity of the summer gales. All this beauty had something violent and

barbaric about it: it had little enough to do with the familiar graces of the English land, nurtured by the variable but steadfastly favouring virtues of the English climate.

There are none who love a fine day as Englishmen do, and they earn the derision of the natives in hot lands because of the way they expose themselves to rays which tropical faiths mythologically represent as both creative and destructive. They gibe at their rains and twilit winters which make their land the greenest in the world, and glorify the majesty of the sun because it has always shone upon them with forbearance and discretion. Now those values are all overturned, and we sing with the witches, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair.' A month of cold unspairing rains would mean more to us now than all the weathers of all the versions of the Earthly Paradise in print. A radiant morning so prodigal of light that it spills over through our blinds and curtains opens a day of weariness, anxiety and loss. It deflowers the gardens, poisons the waters, unleashes the plagues, shrivels the harvest, dulls the landscape and burdens the spirit. At last we transfer our dues of praise to our sister, Water, and very late we realize how wise were the predynastic Egyptians to make water the great life-giver. It was when their politics went wrong that they enthroned the sun-god, but Osiris, the sacred incarnation of water, has survived in the memory of man for more than five thousand years without a stain on his character.

But more important than these immediate reactions will be our philosophical readjustments. Our almost

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instinctive sense of the unity between nature and man has suffered a rude shock. In the old days, the best friend we ever had was that particular brand of nature, elemental and organic, settled to our fond fancy permanently upon our islands. Jungle nature with its extremes of contrast, the nature of the desiccated steppes with its rigid uniformity, the polar nature, harsh stepmother to life, echoed distantly to our knowledge, but never intimately touched our experience. If our own home-nature was not invariably so amenable as we arrogantly expected it to be, it was neither seriously nor for any length of time estranged from us. Now it is good-bye to all that. We have to recognize a dualism in this nature of ours wherein the elemental is in hostile alignment to the world of life. We have to turn our minds to the nature diabolized in King Lear rather than to the rough playmate which to the early Shakespeare could only shake up the darling buds of May, even though in *King Lear* Shakespeare was suffering under the persistent English delusion that storms and deluge are an inimical force to us. And this novel perception of the natural elements being at war with natural life and growth is rather like finding out that the most dear and the most trusted of our human contacts have betrayed us. Hitherto, man has worked in England (and of that lovely co-operation was born the Wordsworthian vision) with the elements on his side. Now he works with the elements martialled against him, not merely in long spells, but persistently and without respite. The traditional English countryside, a work of art, a

masterpiece that has slowly taken shape from the joint partnership of man and nature, has now to reckon with another dragon than progress and the profiteer, one which rides upon the wind and shoots fire upon us from the skies overhead. 'When my Lord's head is filled with dew and all His locks are wet with the clear drops of night' – to that blessed and holy nature we have had to say farewell.

Nevertheless, the final reckoning is not so implacable as was implied in the words of a very shrewd, kindly and well-tempered man who is foreman of the local nurseries: – 'This is something we can't fight against.' The view of any man associated with a horticultural firm in days like these is not unnaturally jaundiced. The worst thing that any living man can feel is that all his efforts, however manful, ungrudging and intelligent, are so much waste labour. Such resignation might be the first psychological reaction from being deserted by the gracious weather which has for centuries gladdened the poet and the ploughman. But the private gardener – and most Englishmen, living as they do in the garden of Albion, are private gardeners – knows better. If Uranus is divorced from Ge and no longer brings fresh showers for the thirsting flowers, what heroism have we not seen in that other world of nature which can never be alienated from us, the kingdom of life! The brave, the indomitable struggle of life against the elemental wrath is something that compensates us even for losing our climate. In May I transplanted some lilies months too late from an old garden to a new. The ground was so hard with drought

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that they had to be wrenched out of it with no soil round the bulbs and roots, and there is nothing that a lily hates so much as disturbance. They had to be carried a quarter of a mile and, because of the severe cold, planted without water. All of them arched their slender forms in sickness and for five days in succession after the operation they had to withstand night-frosts, one of them of ten degrees. Yet

these lilies bore flowers in June. It seemed to me that those frail trumpets made a grander music than that of roaring winds, blue skies and thoughtless stars.

In the response of the living to adversity, and countless examples have I noted, lies a philosophy as warm, as wide and as lofty as any the changed face of elemental nature has forced us to give up.

# The Children's Bread

by F. Mary (Mrs. Clement) Parsons

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WHEN our surprising great-grandparents sat down to their surprising meals, how did our infant grandparents fare, how were their tender digestions protected against catastrophe, and did their allotted portions conform to their preferences or solely to a decreed regimen that, in spite of having been prescientific, may have been sufficiently wholesome? The scarcity of records that might settle these questions seems curious, since taste, the sense earliest awakened, is also the sense nearest allied to the 'eldest, strongest of the passions' Hogarth, Zoffany, Devis provokingly abstained from portraying families with children of various ages at dinner. Had they not, we might have learned the detail of the eighteenth century laid table including its *couverts d'enfants* and three excellent artists would have given the lie to Johnson's dictum that painting can illustrate, but cannot inform. Zoffany's 'The Family of Lord Willoughby de Broke' does indeed depict a little girl, one of three, laying a trespassing hand over a cake dish on a lightly spread tea or breakfast table. The mother's head is turned aside, but the all-seeing, 'period' father, complete in gold-laced scarlet waistcoat, lifts a deterrent finger. Among conversation pieces, and always

excepting the family meals of Carl Larsson, this only slightly apposite situation may well be unique, for Chardin expended his genius on the isolated child eater.

Nor has literature ever taken much account of the mental reactions of well-nourished children towards mealtimes. Here is a subject rich in practical and psychological interest, yet no book, thick or thin, appears ever to have been devoted to it. Such paucity of notice is no doubt partly due to the general disregard accorded to the Very Young by them of old time. Not one Biblical reference leaps to memory, save a repeated mention of children's disillusionment concerning grapes. It was left to 'St. Charles' to imagine his dream-child a lover of grapes replacing a bunch he had abstracted from the dish when he listens to the tale of how an earlier boy, dream-father to him, took greater delight in the 'busy-idle diversions' of the Blakesmoor garden than in the flavours of peaches, nectarines, 'and such like common baits of children.'

In ordinary homes menus are imposed from above with (except on birthdays) no choice on the part of the child. Should he protest or state approval, 'When I've done this can I have some more?' or (in a Boxing Day

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letter), 'There are peasants for lunch so must say good-bye,' he runs some risk of being stigmatized as 'greedy', though usually the epithet is a misfit, for a child, like a dog, ceases to eat when he has eaten enough. Wise Lewis Carroll did not see Alice as a greedy child because she 'very soon finished' the drink that had a mixed flavour of cherry tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffee and hot buttered toast. He knew that at the period when sight is keen and hearing sharp the palate is sensitive. A child's concentration on his helping of cherry tart is not more resolute than his absorption in a story-book; intensity of response to each of the stimuli that successively fill his day is the way of a child.

Gastronomically, my own childhood was unfortunate, my reminiscences being principally made up of memories of distasteful puddings. At midday, at their lunch, my parents lived on boiled foods and expected me to do the same. I loathingly remember boiled 'hand' of pork with pease pudding; boiled sheep's head served whole; boiled calf's head served whole; boiled rice, a ball in shape, accompanied by 'moist' sugar; boiled currant dumplings, wet and whitish outside, drab within. I abhorred suet. I was a fatter. I shared all children's dislike of rice.

Sometimes we ate sweet macaroni pudding, an exclusively British abuse of macaroni. I found no interest in salt cod, its egg sauce always proving a disappointment. Boiled mutton with parsley sauce, boiled beef with turnips, Irish stew – all were savourless – since my elders avoided onions – and all were similar. Apparently, boiling was deemed a form of cookery more

innocuous for family consumption than any of the brown treatments that whet appetite by their sizzling scents. 'May I give your little girl some of this white shape?' said a hostess to my mother when we lunched out, whereat I hastily interpolated, 'Thank you, I don't like mould.' I believed I was offering a softening explanation of refusal, but, as everybody laughed, I was steeped in a wave of shame comparable, I imagine, to the shame of the well-bred chimpanzee who, lunching out, clapped his hands and cheered at the sight of a dish of cherries, and then, because the company expressed amusement, covered his face and refused to eat one cherry.

Broadly speaking, children cling to the familiar and resent innovation. At home, the little boy had not seen roast pork accompanied by apple sauce. Taken out to lunch and afterwards describing his experience, he observed, 'They had pudding with meat.' Rather differently, a young family lunching out refused bread sauce as bread and milk at an incongruous hour.

A child's genuine enthusiasm is for slight breaks in routine. Princess Antoine Bibesco, in a reminiscence of childhood published in a recent miscellany, speaks of 'luncheon with Lord and Lady Manners, where there was always icing sugar instead of ordinary sugar.' Cutlets in paper bags, eggs on spinach, bloater paste sandwiches, dessert in place of pudding, tea at a tea-shop, meringues (sometimes spelt myrangues's) at tea greatly please. What is there about meringues that endears them to the race of children? Their scrunchiness, in part, but also their standardization. Make the filling



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currant jelly and the young visitors let you know the change is no improvement. Unexpectedly supplied with Stop Me bricklets, a party of little bits chant, 'Ice cream is the very best food in the world.' 'What's breakfast, Daddy?' 'Cold grouse and eggs. Spoilt child of luxury, will you have a slice of grouse?' 'What does it taste like? Oh, I know, it has a black taste. Yes, please, I like it.' Few silences are more charming than the primitive silence an eyrie of children preserve during the early stages of a spread they later describe as 'super' or 'beefy.' Yet a child no older than five can think of two things at once, and, expectant of mid-morning orange juice, murmur while fitting together a four hundred piece jigsaw puzzle, mostly sea and sky, 'I wish the orange would come!'

Children are not above boasting to other children of grand home ways. 'We have ham every day at breakfast.' 'So do we.' 'We usually sit up till eight and have soup from the dining-room for supper.' 'So do we.' 'We have Gorgers Only cheese with live things in it.' The last instance reduces the competitive child to a change of topic. When first old enough to stay downstairs for dinner, a state known as 'having supper up,' children are proud and joyful. Having sat mute for some time, a scrap of a thing, five and a half, heaven in her wild flower eyes, asks, 'Can't I have sausages sometimes?' Capella thinks sausages are beautiful.'

Children enjoy pretty kickshaws akin to toys, such as red-shelled eggs at Easter, red jelly in sections of orange peel, lemonade through straws. This is why animal and alphabet biscuits and gingerbread ladies find a welcome

denied to osborne and petit beurre biscuits. Cracknels are reckoned abominable mouthfuls of flour, and I recollect, in an aunt's house, I about nine, my disgust at finding cracknels, filled with jam, set on the table as an accessory lunch dish. Specially delectable macaroons used, in the same remote age, to be purchasable in Hanway Street. Better still, one could stop in Villiers Street before a cave-like shop whence a vanilla scent of *gauffres* cooking over charcoal wafted across the pavement and watch the maker, a Frenchman, dredge icing sugar over the finished products, half a dozen of which one carried home, hot, in white paper. In a glass-roofed emporium, called, I think, the Crystal Palace Bazaar, at Oxford Circus, where in the gallery a piano played continuously and mechanical birds sang, one bought pink or white pop-corn, made freshly with a gas jet for each customer. Opposite this bazaar was 'the only restaurant suitable for ladies shopping.' Those were Spartan times.

Prodigious pains are nowadays taken to secure children a balanced diet, never forgetting 'citrus fruit' and watercress. A dietary dated 1776 survives that prescribed for George III's children, for breakfast 'milk or a basin two-thirds milk and one of tea, moderately sweetened, and dry toast of the Statute bread.' Breakfast at half-past nine, dinner 'from three to five,' supper at half-past eight, on Mondays no supper. Dinner, soup, 'when not very strong or heavy'; any one plain meat with clear gravy and greens; or fish without butter; 'at the second course the fruit of the tart without crust; peas or what other simple thing they

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choose.' At dessert on Sundays and Thursdays ice 'of what sort they choose'; coffee on one of those two days and one glass of any sort of wine. Except for the occasional coffee and wine and the long interval between breakfast and dinner there is nothing to censure in the princes' and princesses' diet-sheet. In ultra-salubrious schools of to-day, where children body-build on uncooked carrots, three meals a day are once more the done thing. It may be that the ancient crimes of boarding schools, underfeeding and innutritious feeding, are not even yet extinct, for, recently, a schoolgirl on announcing to the gym mistress just before gym that she 'felt so hungry' was brusquely advised to get a drink of water and tighten her belt, while a father and mother (this instance also dated 1934), on an observation tour of prep schools, being invited at one of them to lunch with the boys, found a meal consisting of watery mince accompanied by pyramids of potatoes and platterfuls of bread and followed by milk and water tapioca pudding. Too few proteins, too much starch, and the consequence was that two tender juvenals were entered elsewhere.

When a Kafir father helps his son to mealies the child reaches out both hands in testimony to liberality. The idea seems religious and recalls Her-*rick's A Child's Grace*. Time was when before repasts the child of the house was called upon to gratify the table by recital of the two-word grace that goaded the Franciscans into inventing '*franciscus franciscat*.' But domestic ceremonies have melted away and the youngest person present has ceased to be appointed vocal intermediary be-

tween Blesser and blest. Quite likely he himself has acquired sufficient liberty of thought to distinguish between what is seemly to say grace for and what is not. Film-goers who saw the adaptation of Léon Frapiés's *La Maternelle* will remember the incident of the sobbing refusal of the school children to have the rabbit they had stroked and fed killed for their dinner.

Children early feel the pull of the macabre, whence emerges from time to time an inquiring too shattering to be solely ascribed to their well-known tendency to go on asking questions in order to hold up the stream of events. 'Is this beef I'm eating?' 'No, leg of lamb.' 'Do you mean the same lambs we saw playing in the field?' 'Not the same; but some lamb.' 'If that lamb came into the room now would he know it was his leg?' 'No'. 'But if he did, what should we say?'

At the farthest remove from Cross-jay Patterne's description of himself and his seven brothers and sisters as 'All hungry!' is the child who, though up and about, refuses to eat, or refuses everything but wedding cake, or refuses everything unless he is first perched on his pony, or adopts any other method of creating self-importance or expressing hostility by refusal of food. Various ways of tackling such a child are recommended by specialists. Bertrand Russell favours an assumption of indifference, the reverse of the usual anxious coaxing, concerning all actions a child ought to perform spontaneously. He cites his own little boy who in the nursery had been persistently wheedled into eating. 'One day when we had him for his midday meal he refused to eat his pudding, so we sent it out.

# Florence Mary Parsons

After a while he demanded it back, but the cook had eaten it. He was flabbergasted, and never made such pretences with us again.' (*On Education*, p. 137.) Offhandedness is a useful instrument.

In view of the endless modes of presenting the staples, bread, mutton, bacon, sugar, apples and milk, why should children be coerced into eating any form of food specially distasteful to them? There must be less stupid ways of teaching self-mastery than to struggle for two years with a family of three in the hope of conquering their aversion to the skin on hot milk, a process related by the German writer, W. Stern, as having occurred in his household (*Psychology of Early Childhood*, Eng. Tr., p. 448, 9), with, as he frankly states, only qualified success. 'Self-mastery was the final result, but the aversion continued undiminished.'

When young creatures picnicking call corned beef pemmican its perfunctoriness is forgotten and they are nourished they care not how, for next after hunger as sauce comes romance, known to Stevenson as Child's Play, and to the modern school (a trifle cumbrously) as the fantasy-percept built by apperception and remembrance out of objective fact. In a child's world, beauty, humour and badinage are near relations to romance. A small girl looks at her plate of strawberries and cream with enjoyment. 'Dark red and white together, they are lovely,' she says rapturously. 'A pity to eat them!' Then, laughing, pushes in the spoon; and another day, when her nurse interposes, 'Euphrasia, you have had enough cherries. Give me the plate,' replies, 'No, no, I am like

Daddy, I can't bear waste.' No wonder child-friends clustered round Dodgson, who liked, he told them, a little mustard with a bit of beef spread thinly under it, or brown sugar with apple pudding mixed with it, or salt with some soup poured over it to keep it from being dry.

Too fastidious to endure the skin on hot milk and set retching by the lines,

'Busy, curious, thirsty fly!

Drink with me and drink as I:

Freely welcome to my cup' . . .

children are tremblingly fascinated by images of disgust. There was a friend of my family, an Arctic voyager, Sir John Richardson, very old when I was born, concerning whom it was whispered to me, a young child, that he had become a vegetarian ever since he once was compelled to eat human flesh. I recall the faintness, an actual sickness of heart made up of awe, compassion and horror, that oppressed me after this revelation, causing repeated imaginary rebuildings of the hateful episode. Conrad, in *A Personal Record*, tells how he suffered, when a child, similar distress from a not dissimilar story of starving men. The dog 'was large.' . . . 'He was eaten. The rest is silence. . . . A silence in which a small boy shudders and says firmly: "I could not have eaten that dog." ' And his grandmother remarks, ' "You don't know what it is to be hungry." '

While adults get 'up' from meals, children, long after the age of high chairs, get 'down'. Table manners have kept pace with the progressive civilization of meals. Implements of nursery eating have refined, and no

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cherished children of 1934 need the advice given in Hawkins's *Youth's Behaviour* in 1635, 'sometimes to look off the meat, without wishly looking on the meat before others.' Yet in many a nursery the right carriage of the fork remains misunderstood, the concave side being used for transport of a mixed load.

The heart, we know, has reasons of which reason knows nothing, and Thetis, aged ten, out at tea among oldish persons and replying to 'Indian or China?' 'Indian, please,' illustrates the aphorism by murmuring to a confidential grandfather next her, 'I said Indian because Mum and Daddy are in India.' Children are apt to say they don't like a dish they have never tasted either because they don't care for its name or because a negative is easier. A tiny boy entertained at tea proves a specializer in audacious refusal. 'Bread and butter?' 'No, thank you.' 'A sandwich?' 'No, thank you.' 'Try

cake!' 'No, thank you.' 'Nothing?' 'I only said "no thank you" to tease you,' he observes benignly, stretching his summer-brown hand towards sandwiches.

Hawthorne, in one of his letters, states that, when a child, he thought mothers lived without eating as well as without sleeping, a dangerous piece of sentimentality. On every ground it is well for families to be together at some of the meal hours because children unconsciously acquire experience of life through the general intercourse of the table. Cobbett, busy man though he was, always found time to talk with his children. The child first downstairs in the morning sat on his right at dinner. When himself a child in his grandmother's two-windowed cottage, he had fared on milk and bread for breakfast, apple pudding for dinner, a piece of bread and cheese for supper, and been thriftily admonished to 'bite his bread and smell to his cheese.'

# The Widower's Son

by Francis J. Kelly

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JERRY DOYLE stepped out of the mourning coach at the main gate of the cemetery, limping in from the edge of the path. His legs were 'dead' from the knees down. On the journey he had been squeezed in between his father and a stranger, the latter of amazing fatness, which spread itself out over the seat as if the clothes were inadequate banks barely able to contain the flesh they covered. body like a squat barrel, legs like tightly packed sausages. Jerry grinned at the image and even at the 'pins and needles,' proclaiming the return of circulation in his legs and feet.

A grin. It was like a flag hastily waved from a beleaguered citadel, a sign that the boy of fifteen still survived notwithstanding appearances. He leaned heavily against the stone pediment of the gate, a listless, long-necked, long-legged figure. The grin faded out like a sputtering lamp in the dawn, leaving his brown eyes dark and serious, his mouth hanging. For the rest, he accepted his present state of almost ludicrous helplessness without a sign of protest as the natural development of the events of the past few weeks. Beginning simply enough as a startling puzzle, they had developed stealthily, reducing him, ere he was aware of it, to a mood of passive in-

difference to everything. His senses were numb; even as his feet were at the moment, and thus rendered impervious to the hard, scorching pebbles under them.

But a short while ago and he would have resented with all the boyish vigour natural to his years the irksome restraints laid upon him, but now he accepted them passively; new black suit, stiff collar, painfully new shoes, chafing his heels. He shrank within them as a timid knight in a suit of armour, or as a snail within its shell.

Peering around. How different the whole place looked this morning, yet nothing was changed. All the familiar sights were there that he had so often before glanced at casually and thought all right, especially on a bright sunny morning like this. Yet to-day, standing outside the gate through which the hearse went at a gallop, he felt the strongest possible aversion from entering. The pleasant playground of other occasions now showed itself a place of grim finalities. The squat, grey stone office inside the gate; the small cruciform mortuary chapel, farther in among the dark green trees, stood out stark, proclaiming their business; even the grass was reduced to a mere green cover for death's table. Away out and

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above all these strained the round tower, white as the clouds in the sky, which it seemed to threaten.

Dully he glanced down the road. The usual string of vehicles was there: mourning coaches, a few taxis, and cabs with decrepit horses and thread-bare drivers – a collection of rags and bones. Compared with these last, the undertaker's men cut quite a dash in their furry tall hats and mouldy looking coats. Merciless, the sun beat down, gilding the shabby trappings of death as if to make them ridiculous. From the groups farthest away came now and then a sudden squirt of laughter.

Against the grey stone wall crouched a few women in shawls, with baskets of apples and oranges, flat brown cakes and bottles of ruby-coloured minerals. Many a time Jerry had regaled himself from these same baskets – this morning the mere sight of their contents nearly turned him. But then he had been barely able to gulp down a cup of tea, much to his father's undisguised annoyance, who had eaten a very hearty breakfast, and a few minutes later, with the bread-crumbs and traces of egg and grease on his lips, had answered a neighbour's condolence with a mournful shake of the head and something about 'the light has gone out of my life.'

Scarcely noticed at the time, nevertheless the words had sunk quietly into his mind like the eggs of some insect, and, now recalled, they swarmed buzzing in his head as annoying as a cloud of midges impossible to beat off. Silly, meaningless, out of some sloppy love song or other, he supposed. *The light* – how it shone on the gilt figures and hands on the blue face of the clock,

and the braid on the blue coat of the official so stern, looking under his peak cap, to whom the driver of the hearse handed a docket. Never before had Jerry taken any notice of him.

Not the sort of song he and mother sang together last thing at night when he slept in her bed – only a kid then. A long time ago it seemed now, but a few years really, and yet he could not recall a line of them. Sitting up as high as possible in the bed, fighting sleep – hated going to sleep, did still, morning came so soon – he used to join her in singing songs, mostly hymns, though. A thin, sweet voice she had, sad somehow, like a robin's in winter. Try as he might, it would fade away from him as he sank down, down, holding on to this silver thread of song, growing fainter and fainter, until it ceased in darkness soft as velvet.

Like so many straggling sheep, the people moved in twos and threes along the pebbly path to the church, where the hearse already stood. A stumpy structure of grey stone, the tall white tower so near it dwarfed the church to little more than an enlarged tombstone. The high narrow windows seemed designed to keep out any light that might try to peer through the chill gloom of the interior. The mourners, shuffling in and settling themselves at the *prie-dieux*, looked like figures in half-relief on a fiasco of shadow. What light there was gathered round the brightly varnished coffin, shining on the brass plate and handles, as if to protect it from the sinister shadows, cold and gloomy.

At the head of the coffin stood, silent and solemn, the tall grey-haired priest and a boy, the latter holding a

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vessel containing holy water and a sprinkler. Outside the area of light surrounding the coffin they waited, cold, aloof, in black and white vestments, the advance guard of the dark, hungry earth. A deep hole in the moist, brown clay full of creeping, blind life. Jerry shuddered; if only they embalmed people now as they used to do long ago.

*De profundis clamavi ad te Domine. . .* Muffled and hollow, the voices rose and fell in the last appeal of humanity, frightened by a glimpse of the eternity of its own saints and sinners. The words scarce uttered ere they were swallowed up, as if within the walls and ceiling lurked some monster insatiable, barely kept at bay by their constant repetition as an incantation dispelling the powers of darkness and invoking those of light.

Where Jerry knelt at the door but an odd phrase of the Latin reached him. He had lingered there because of a scarcely realized aversion from kneeling right in the centre of all those people's gaze. By himself – yes gladly would he have knelt at the coffin for ever, but not there and beside his father, too. . . .

Kneeling with bent back and lowered head, the bald circular patch gleaming in the sun, his father looked like a figure in a stained glass window, a tonsured saint. Saint, Jerry wondered, gazing at but scarcely seeing him. Vigorously sprinkling holy water, the priest landed many drops on the bald patch: dew glistening on a mushroom.

*Et lux perpetua luceat . . .*

As from a distance, weary and faint, the words reached Jerry scarce

heard in the dream-like state into which he had sunk. The narrow shaft of light streaming softly down . . .

Months ago, startled by a sound, tiny but sharp, piercing as the prod of a needle in a hand idly feeling soft cloth, he stood on the landing outside his mother's bedroom, holding his breath. Gone was the silence he had thought sole companion of her lying within so deathly quiet, hollow-cheeked. A sudden impulse had sent him in from the sunny street to have a peep when there was no one else there and, above all, when she might have her eyes closed. Open, he could scarce bear to look at them of late. They seemed to have grown so big with staring yet seeing nothing seemingly, as if they never closed – big, almost threatening, yet empty, sometimes moving no more than the eyes of a corpse move. For a while he stood on the landing, her door closed, but that opposite was half-open to a shaft of light streaming down from the skylight. Idly his eyes followed the motes dancing down that beam into the room. . . . The bald patch glistening in the light, the bent back, arms stretched over the sofa, his father utterly unaware of him, of everything. Bit by bit, as Jerry lived through the scene again, that moment's bewilderment gradually arose from the depths within him, a shapeless monster seizing him and shaking him out of his dreaming. Questions rained upon him, meaningless or else so charged with meaning as to be unbearable.

'What did it mean?' Jerry all but cried aloud in anguished perplexity, rising to his feet and moving into the church to where she lay. But at that moment, the prayers ended, everyone

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stood up and moved out through the side door after the coffin – and he went with them, out into the blazing sunshine.

Arm up, shielding his eyes, Jerry stumbled down the steps, nearly falling.

Immediately he was surrounded by friendly hands and consoling voices. Sympathy, effusive yet none the less sincere, as Jerry knew full well and, partly for that very reason, resented the more, because it was so nearly, but not quite, what he longed for. Balm, soothing and pleasant enough in itself, became an irritant by just missing the dull throbbing pain, the exact seat of which even he could not precisely locate.

They spoke to him of mother and heaven. Well, yes, he believed all that, of course, but then heaven seemed so very far away. The sky was wrapped in its deep blue mantle of remoteness, made a little less unfriendly by a strip of tiny cirrus clouds. A dazzling silver strand; how soft and soothing under one's bare feet padding along at the edge of that vast, blue sea. Jerry's feet were aching in the tight shoes slithering along the gravelly path.

That mother would be up there in heaven waiting for him seemed natural enough, understandable, for so he had always been taught. She was not lost to him, though so terribly far away, but his father walking beside her coffin only a few yards ahead – Jerry felt he was further away, almost lost in a fog, the haze of memories that had just now risen up so stealthily, enveloping and benumbing, through which he must walk. Such was his immediate sorrow, torment rather, and these people spoke to him of something else.

Useless to think they would understand anything of this, for had his father not said, and they repeated with so much solemnity, 'the light has gone out of my life.' But then neighbours often hear things, and their queer manner towards him weeks before mother died – suppose they did suspect something?

Jerry halted, almost recoiling. It was as if the question, once evoked, spread itself across his path, a sort of fungus, clammy, untouchable, scarce bearable to look at, yet not to be ignored. There had been queer talk, now he remembered. Perhaps nothing very definite, rather a vague feeling of something in the air, the sudden silence when he drew near a group of the neighbours talking together with much head-shaking, and, above all, attempts to 'mother' him, as if he were already motherless. Once, though, he had overheard something about madness, but that might, *must*, have been a mistake. Jerry recalled the shrinking terror, his limbs seemingly turned to water, with which he had once, years ago, walked through a lunatic asylum clinging to his uncle's arm. Wild eyes staring wide out of hairy faces, and, above all, the sudden startling laughter – the shrill of a peacock and the scream of a horse in pain – these were mad people. And his mother? – *no, no*, it was unthinkable.

Ahead of him the narrow path wriggled its way through the dark green trees and the light green grass: a grey caterpillar bearing along the procession, a curiously coloured load. Hats, hard, black and soft, grey, clothes of all shades; limp and listless figures dragging along after the cart



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on which the coffin gleamed. In front, pulling and pushing, were four gravediggers, clad in corduroy, deep ridged, like a sun-baked ploughed field. A distant, flat, green patch of the cemetery was ablaze with glass wreaths. Some of those near him were broken, glass and bits of the flowers lying around, a small statue of the Virgin lying beside an up-turned jam jar, from which withered flowers lay scattered. Years ago he used to play 'shop' with just such bits of delph and glass – only a kid then. Not so many years ago either, five maybe, and yet now he felt strangely old. Or is this being old? Jerry asked himself. If so, it was not a bit grand, as he and all the fellows used to think it would be – more like being sick. Ever since the day he had glimpsed into the room beside his mother's. A harmless, meaningless sort of business he had always thought it, though some of the fellows used to make a great fuss over it, as if kissing girls – queer, sloppy affair – meant something tremendous. No, there was nothing at all in it, he murmured, nothing at all. And yet? The more he thought over that incident, so trifling in itself, in connection with the talk among the fellows at school to the accompaniment of winks and gestures, the scraps of conversation between grown-ups overheard from time to time, the less sure he felt. Now he was like one strayed in tangled undergrowth, unable to go forward or retreat, unable even to see the ground on which he stands. Lost.

'Suppose I ask father?' Jerry murmured. 'No, I dare not. One of these people, the neighbours, then? No, no, they would be sure to laugh at me,

and, anyhow, what could I tell them, how explain? If I mention it in confession what would the curate say to me, and father one of the principal men in the church, collecting on Sundays, and all that? He'd surely lecture me on impure thoughts and give me no satisfaction either.'

No, it was his secret. A mere speck in the sky at first, it had spread out like a huge cloud, lowering and sinister, enveloping him. Must remain his secret, too. So she would have it, did she know, and perhaps, up there, she *did* know, understanding everything now so much better than people down here could. Maybe she was looking down on him this very minute. Huge soft masses of white woolly clouds were piled up in the north. Jerry wished he could sink right down through them until everything was blotted clean out, till he forgot everything, without knowing there was anything to forget. Meanwhile, and Jerry shrugged his shoulders, he must hug the secret to himself, like the Spartan boy with the fox. Queer, he had always thought that a silly yarn, but now, somehow, it didn't seem so. He stiffened himself up.

Yes, but the Spartan was hiding something he did himself, Jerry reflected bitterly, whereas this is just as if a fellow kicked over a stone long lying in soft ground – 'Oh, I can't make it out, I'll forget it,' he cried aloud, starting to run.

Jerry pulled up suddenly when he remembered where he was and dropped into a quick walk which soon brought him up with the rear of the procession. Glossy black, and dull yellow, bright eyes, quick head, every hop seeming as

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if it might as easily land him on the top of a tree as over the nearest tuft of grass. Life, sheer joy of living in every twist and turn of the blackbird as Jerry watched.

Mother had been like that, full of life. To listen to her was grand even when scolding, for without looking up he always knew there was a funny light lurking in her eyes, ready to jump up when he said he was sorry. And now he could never tell her. Sorry he had ever vexed her, sorry he hadn't done more, everything, to please her. He looked round him. The trees breathless in the blue haze of heat, the dim outline of the distant hills – a purple-clad woman lying on her side – the sky now dropping a filmy lid, all should bear witness to his sorrow. If only he had studied hard at the Jesuits' College to which she had insisted on sending him, won a prize, if only for good attendance. But no, he had done nothing to please her, and now it was too late.

But then, how was he to know she was going to die when everyone said she was getting better, as she was – he was certain of it – until that queer change came over her so suddenly, so mysteriously? Not even the doctor could explain it, but what an awful difference it made in her, in everything.

Through the crowd Jerry just caught a glimpse of his father shuffling along close behind the coffin, head down, on bowed shoulders. So different from her. Long-jawed, drooping moustache over thick red lips, gloomy as that old yew tree over there. People were always praising him, always, yet – To be sure, Jerry admitted, he was free enough with money, no way stingy.

And he had loved mother too, of course – who wouldn't? – changing completely when she was near him, coming to life it seemed and hovering around her, long arms hanging by his sides awkwardly, as if restrained from seizing her, brown eyes queerly moist looking all over her. And mother loved him too.

How eagerly she listened for his footsteps on the stairs when she first lay down, and how her eyes would follow him, so hairy looking and gloomy, about the room. Feet dangling, Jerry sat on the edge of the bed watching: a fairy dancing around an old briar – no, Beauty and the Beast. That was it. He smiled to recall the sudden laugh he had given that day and how it had startled them all, including himself, as if something bright had suddenly flashed in among them. Even father, glowering quickly up from under suspicious, shaggy eyebrows, joined mother in the laughter, though neither knew nor asked what he was laughing at. Just a game of laughter. The last happy time they spent together.

Jerry shivered, suddenly feeling chill and lonely. With difficulty he kept himself from clutching at one of these people's arms beside him and pouring out all that was in his mind. But how begin? Oh, he could yell – but if he did they'd think him mad. No, all effort was useless, he could do nothing – best not to try even. His heart was empty, as if within him there was only a great space without light, where these thoughts must wander forlornly, unable to die, to vanish. Ah! if they would only go as they had come, unbidden.

For a while, unawares, he stared at a tombstone: stumpy pillars like

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chair legs supporting a flat, highly polished slab, red-veined, shining like a mirror. The washstand in her room has a top of the same kind of stone.

Her room. The big wardrobe with a mirror door standing against the side wall; between the two windows, the centre of the room was taken up by the big bed, the two pillows and turned-down sheet always snow-white. Over the bed was a picture of the Blessed Virgin resting on a wooden bracket on which stood two vases, a miniature altar. How proud he had felt the first time he was allowed to help to dress the altar.

In a procession the flowers had passed, the chalice-like crocuses of yellow to the bedraggled hawthorn in front of that picture smiling on them all alike.

'There, maybe, lies help for me,' Jerry murmured, as he saw the picture through his tears, and already he felt relieved, like a sleeper awakening from a bad dream.

In his new-found happiness he pitied his father walking beside the coffin so desolate looking. He asked forgiveness of him, for the terrible thoughts he had had that should have been squelched like so many cockroaches. And surely he deserved pity for what he suffered at her hands the last few weeks of her life. Indeed, Jerry wondered now, looking back on it all, why his father humoured her in every whim however absurd. To be sure the doctor said there was nothing else to be done, evidently not understanding her at all, but then the expense. One day it would be some fancy wine never heard of before, which she scarcely tasted, or foods out-of-

season left aside all wasted. Then she insisted on different specialists being called in who had scarcely left ere she denounced them as quacks. As Jerry thought it over he felt sympathetic towards his father as against his mother, well as he loved her, and to feel that there was something in the neighbours' saying she was trying to ruin him before she died. But why should she? And, above all, why did father behave as if he daren't refuse her anything, however unreasonable? The one person who could get any good of mother during these last few weeks was her sister, without whom, everyone said, his father could not have managed at all.

And yet, mother had changed so strangely in those days as scarce to seem the same woman. Her eyes, like a brown pool on a mountain top, sometimes sombre under grey skies, sometimes flashing with the stars of night, but always lovely and full of light. Her eyes. Gradually fading out till at last they resembled stones set in a face of old, deeply lined ivory. In spite of himself, and, above all, his determination to ignore the neighbours' whispers, fear of her crept in on him like a tide cutting him off, helpless. Besides, he justified himself, she too changed towards him, all but repelling him.

Then a few days before her death she had beckoned him to her side. Shaken between surprise and joy, Jerry had stood, head down, silent, his heart fluttering like a bird with a broken wing. Strangely she looked, not at, but over and beyond him, utterly aloof it seemed, only for her white fingers, terribly thin, rumpling his hair. Silently he waited. Suddenly she turned her head away. When he looked up

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puzzled, he saw his father was standing just inside the door. Jerry started forward. But his father came no nearer. For what seemed a breathless age till he felt like one submerged in deep, still water, they stood facing each other. Then his father withdrew and he followed, both moving ghost-like, silently.

Later, Jerry realized that his father avoided, as far as possible, being alone with her. Nor did he wonder, recalling how she had looked the very last time all three were in the room together. Whenever she looked in his father's direction her face changed completely from the moment before, the passive ivory mask snatched away. Instead, there was the wild and stealthy aspect of a lunatic about to shout out an angry insane secret; one of those misshapen heartrending secrets, that tear the entrails like wild beasts in the jungle twilight of madness. Recalling all this now, Jerry looked again at his father and pitied him. And yet . . . that scene glimpsed through the half-open door confronted him again, rising wraith-like through the mist of this pity.

The procession came to a standstill beside the grave: an iodine-painted wound in the grass. The coffin lowered, the mourners stood with bared heads, lips moving silently. As the grave-diggers grasped their shovels, Jerry looked away across the fields, staring at the horizon. The plomp of the sods on the coffin sounded through his reverie, the noise of a muffled drum steadily increasing until it lost all special character in a mere crumbling sound. Then the coffin cart was pushed back with a sharp piercing noise, strangely reminiscent, summoning the shadows to his reverie . . .

. . . standing on the landing outside his mother's bedroom, silent, barely breathing, hearing his heart beat in the stillness of the house. A sharp, creaking sound from the other room had pulled him up short. The house then was not empty as he had thought when a sudden impulse sent him in from the street. Just to peep in at her when those terribly changed eyes were covered. Cautiously, as though he might make a noise so doing, he turned his head towards the other room. Reclining on the sofa, his aunt is looking up at his father, whose back is to the door. Then, as Jerry stands there puzzled, his father stoops down suddenly and kisses her real hard, while she throws her arms around his neck. Flushing hot all over, he tiptoes into his mother's room. How white she looks, and quiet the room, the picture of the Virgin dominating everything. For an instant he stands just within the door as if he dared go no further here, after what he had witnessed in the other room. As he steals out he notices that the wardrobe door is half open, making the other room partly visible from the bed. Only vaguely does Jerry realize these things.

As it all came to him standing in the sun-smitten graveyard he watched the incidents fitting together like a jigsaw puzzle making a picture crude and cruel. Gasping, Jerry woke from his trance.

'Oh, mother, mother,' he sobbed, springing forward towards the grave, a fresh brown mound. A heavy-eyed grave-digger lifted his head, and looked at him open-mouthed. Jerry fell on his knees drooping, his face bent to the ground.

# Mignon

by Allston A. Kisby

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## I

A FORTNIGHT before Christmas in the year 1542, a man lay dying in the grey stone keep of Falkland. The dying man was James the Fifth, King of Scotland and husband to Mary of Lorraine, daughter of Claude, Duc de Guise and widow of Louis d'Orleans, Duc de Longueville.

The weather was bleak and hostile. Three feet of snow had been followed by a sudden veering of the wind to the east. Weeks of black frost had made the roads impassable, nailing a stiff white shroud upon the frozen earth. The royal residence was practically isolated. The sting of that east wind could not be kept on the outside of the thick stone walls. Although braziers burned and crackled on each side of the great bed, many of the watchers wore fur and chafed icy fingers. The man on the bed shivered in the grip of a chill no mortal fire could dispel. A dour Scotch physician, with a face as grim as the weather, dressed in a long furred gown mixed potions at a side table stacked with bottles. A boarhound with red-rimmed eyes lay with its massive head on its paws staring into the heart of one of the braziers, sneezing in the yellow smoke that swirled knee-deep about the floor.

The room held a dozen men.

Nearly all of them were old, bearded, faces lined and scarred. They whispered in couples or fidgeted singly, or gazed furtively at the painful movements of the man on the bed. Few men are privileged to see a king die.

The king's eyes were dull, but when they rested on the whisperers, voices were hushed, confounded and appalled.

A servant, a little thin clean-shaven man, crept through the narrowly opened door. His blue chin quaked with ill-suppressed excitement. One old courtier — who had been occupying a place of honour at the head of the bed, glared at him in anger and went to meet him, his beard wagging. They met by the hound, which started up and licked the old man's shoe. The lackey whispered a few words into the old man's ear, left the room with his head high as if conscious of the gazes which followed him. The old courtier glanced at the dying man, bowed and quietly backed out after the menial. Speculation and whispering became intense. Even the doctor looked round from his phials and philtres.

A few minutes later the old man returned. His face was very red, lip-quivering. He was nearly eighty. He limped from an old sword wound in the

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left thigh. His eyes were blue. He limped across to the physician. The two held an inaudible conversation. The old man was asking something about the man on the bed, for he pointed twice in that direction. The doctor stepped over to the bedside, looked at his patient closely and professionally, thumbing his chin with a grey bony hand. He nodded.

The old man suddenly fell on his knees by the bed, kneeling awkwardly on the long black step. The left leg was stiff. His beard brushed the crumpled, gilded coverlet. He took the hand which lay there, a rough brown hand covered with a mat of thick dark hair. The hand was cold, damp with icy sweat under the thick hair. He kissed it. A tear dropped.

The head of the dying man rolled towards him as if the neck were powerless or broken. The dull eyes fixed themselves with an unwinking intensity on the face of the old man. The aged courtier mumbled over the hairy paw. The hound rose uneasily, came over and licked the old man's shoe, then his leg.

'Your Majesty -' he began. His voice cracked. 'Your Majesty -' but again it failed. The old man swallowed. 'Your Majesty, - Sire - it is my duty to inform you that a messenger has just arrived from Linlithgow with the welcome news that Her Gracious Majesty has given birth to a daughter. Both are well.'

The old man bent his lips - but the king with an unexpected access of strength tore his hand away. His eyes became distended and injected with blood. He clutched at the bedclothes, twisting them in the fingers. He

strained, reared himself up in the bed, his body swaying like a tree in a gale. Curious thick noises bubbled and oozed in his throat. He fought for speech. Cords in his neck stood out. At last the words came, thickly and only half audible.

'A daughter. A bitch, I knew it. I knew it. French mares never did breed anything but girls. A daughter. The devil go with it. The crown came to us through a woman, it will end with a woman. A bitch - the devil.'

He fell back slowly, like a man slowly drowning. His eyes were open, their expression incommunicable. His lips were fixed tight in a grin. The courtiers crowded round the bed - but the physician drove them back. He bent over the man on the bed muttering. The hound ran to the door, scratched and whined.

Mary became a queen at the age of one week.

## II

On the evening of February 7th, 1587, a woman wrote at a small table in a compartment of Fotheringay Castle. She was dressed in subdued grey. A black lap dog lay twitching and shivering in a dream on the portion of her gown that draped the floor. The little dog was very old. Its snout had become quite grey. Its teeth, showing now and then in a whimpering snarl were yellow and worn down to little blunt stumps. One of its eyes was open, but the orb was light blue, opaque, fixed and unseeing. Its long black hair had lost its shine. Its paws

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were grey, the claws splintered and ragged.

Mary was now in her forty-fifth year. This night of the seventh of February – black without and spitting with rain in the wind gusts – was to be her last. She was writing poetry.

The writing of poetry in the condemned cell was in strict accordance with the character of tragic heroine which destiny had marked out for her. Men's last utterances are frequently – are almost invariably poems, and it would probably be difficult to imagine an occasion in a man's life more truly poetic than the evening before his execution, when all hope has been pruned away and the end is as certain as the sunrise. The Elizabethans made a fashion of composing lyrics to prelude their violent ends. Usually these last-minute requiems were in the manner of Chidiack Tichbourne, who, some three months before this fateful night, and immediately previous to being quartered for the diversion of a Tyburn mob, had written in his cell in the Tower –

*I looked for Life, and saw it was a Shade,  
I trod the Earth, and knew it was my Tomb.*

Tichbourne was a young and hairless gallant – life, a glove tossed on a sword-point. And in spite of any momentary morbid regrets faced an awful death with unflinching eyes. He died before a howling mob with his soul in full sweet blossom, died for an ideal. He died without cooling from his martyr's ecstasy. Not so Babington, who, older, had squealed for mercy, and who would have sacrificed Mary herself to save his own pelt. Youth does not grovel; its eyes are enraptured by the

crown of martyrdom – even under the Tyburn quartering knife. When their heads were held up before the crowd Babington's eyes were closed, Tichbourne's were wide open. And the woman they died for was still locked in her cage.

But the death song of this woman was subtly different, its spirit not quite in alignment with the occasion of its composition. To begin with, she was forty-five. Her youth was far behind, obscured and distorted by clouds of later tragedies. She had been waiting for death a very long time. Life had shown her more horrors than usually come to the lot of a single being. Her soul was not drunken with the sight of any bright crown of martyrdom. She had been caught in the cold iron coils of a series of calamities from which there was not the faintest hope of escape. She was like a fly caught in the meshes of a vast machine and all her struggles and writhings made the end quite unalterable and entirely unavoidable.

So she sat down and wrote poetry.

*O Domine Deus – she sang.  
O Domine Deus, speravi in te!  
O care mi Jesu, nunc libera me!  
In dura catena, in misere poena,  
Languendo, gemendo, et genu flectendo,  
Adoro, imploro, O libera me!*

It is a far cry from composing epithalamiums with Ronsard to writing a requiem with one's own soul. Mary had been taught poetics by Ronsard; her Latin came from that good Scot, scholar Buchanan.

For many moments Mary must have stared at the writing that had

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appeared under her pen, a little mystified by the way a solemn theme had bent itself into such a galloping song. Perhaps it reminded her of a little princess who sang in the fairy palace of Saint Germain many years before, a little golden-haired fairy princess who sang French songs and plucked roses, and laughed. Laughter.

*O Domine Deus* – and suddenly she had a vision of old John Knox with his patriarchal beard and hot projecting eyes, thundering against the Whore of Babylon and the Whore of Rome, and she recollected how she had emerged from an encounter with the fanatic, in tears. Tears. Laughter and Tears. But the old man had gone to his fathers. His thunder was silenced, and she was in an English prison waiting for the dawn. What was laughter? Laughter and roses!

The little dog twitched and shivered and suddenly cried aloud. Mary drove her pen into the wood, breaking the quill, and looked down. The dog was staring up at her, its old grey head twisted sideways because of its blind eye. Catching her eye, it wagged its tail and rubbed against her foot. She picked it up. The little body was naught but skin and bone, lighter than air. It curled down in her lap while she fingered its ears, staring straight in front of her at the poem. But she did not see the Latin. Her eyes had gone back and were discovering the dim caves of memory.

She had spent her youth in fairy-land. She remembered the wonderful voyage to France in that sunny July when she was six. It was a fairy ship, in which she had sailed, a fairy ship, gliding smoothly over a rippled, green

sea ; sky, blue as a painting in a missal, puffed with white clouds. The mariners were taking a fairy princess to be betrothed to a fairy prince across the sea. They laughed and sang. Dolphins skipped in the green waves. Great white-winged birds hung in the blue. She marvelled at the great sails and with what skill the sailors hoisted them into position, clambering over the frail ropes and spars. Wonder followed hard on the heels of wonder. There came the landing in Brittany – France, her mother's country. Crowds of peasants in quaint bright costumes lined the sea wall and cheered as the ship drew smoothly to the shore. When she stepped ashore one woman in a bright red dress and gleaming black laced bodice had rushed up and kissed her hand. Crowds of citizens filled the queer cobbled streets and hung from the windows as the procession carrying the little Scotch queen wound its way to Saint Germain. That was a fairy palace, comparable only to palaces seen in dreams, of a magnificence beyond imagination. The great king she hardly ever saw, but every day she greeted Catherine de Medici, the mother of the pale silent young prince she was to marry. One day she was to be a great queen with twenty curtsying ladies outside the door of her chamber, not merely queen of a cold foggy land – but queen of the great country of France which was richer than England and almost as rich as Spain. Her husband, the pale youth, was to be king. Already the French gallants bowed and paid her extravagant compliments.

The ten years she spent in France were dream-like in their happiness.



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Her marriage with the pale silent boy who had grown into a weak and sickly young man, eight years her senior, was the one jarring note. Two years of nominal marriage to an ailing and defective prince, two years and he was dead, his pale face hardly disfigured by death. She was a widow at sixteen. And one foggy August morning she found herself on a French ship sailing for Scotland, leaving her land of dreams in the hands of the merchant's daughter. The sea was black and oily, only just distinguishable. The mast heads were hidden by the fog. The sailors were gloomy and silent, apprehensive of an English attack. Even Chastelard the irrepressible was silent. Mary was in tears, and the two little black lap dogs in her cabin failed to cheer her.

The happy dream ended. The nightmare began. The rest of life unfolded itself as a tragedy of such unspeakable horror that Webster at his darkest could not have conceived the like.

Her land torn apart by religion; one sect looking upon her as their tool, the other as a wicked foreign whore. Even Knox who, if fanatical and dour, was never deliberately untruthful, wrote: 'We call her not an whore, but she was brought up in the company of the wildest whoremongers.' Fate pointed from one climax to another even more terrifying – and there was no pause or respite. Her marriage with the malignant and jealous Darnley – the murder of Riccio on the very threshold of her chamber – Darnley's assassination – Bothwell's rape of her – and now a condemned woman writing poetry and the whole of Protestant

England gloating over her harlot's progress.

*O Domine Deus, speravi in te!*

### III

Nineteen years of imprisonment in England had rounded the fine shoulders and bowed the tall figure of the Queen of Scots. Illness and inadequate medical attention had stiffened her limbs and wrecked her physique. The hair had lost its fine blonde and auburn tints. It was grey and thin, hidden beneath false locks. The long, pale, finely cut face had withered and shrunk, the brow lined and scored. But the eyes had never changed. They remained as bright, as golden, as unshrinking and as enigmatic as ever.

Suddenly the dog moved and she felt a hot pink tongue slide over her fingers. The queen looked puzzled a moment, then laughed quietly. It was a sound her lips were unused to, and Jane Kennedy, tearfully pretending to read her book of Hours, looked up surprisedly. The queen laughed, remembering how another little black dog – a female ancestor of Mignon, had bitten the noble arm of the learned Abbe de Brantôme when he had insisted on carrying it ashore at Leith. The shouting of the foreign Scotch voices, the strange figures half hidden in the fog had frightened her. White teeth met in the Abbe's forearm. 'An ill omen?' d'Amville hazarded. 'An ill omen, Sieur Abbe?' 'Not so my friend,' was the quick rejoinder. 'Is she not a bitch, and to be touched by the lips of a lady – and of a lady of such

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exalted lineage were surely no ill omen.' Brantôme had a tongue swift to turn as a snake. That had happened twenty-six years before. An ill omen!

She had brought two of them from France and she had never been without this breed of little black lap dogs. All through her life they had passed. At every turning point a little black lap dog lay. One was left – old Mignon, who had outlived her children, for what purpose but to mark the end of the last league.

On that terrible night of March the ninth, when Riccio had sung his last song –

*Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir la  
chandelle,  
Assise auprès du feu, devidant et filant –*

singing in his queer Italian accent at Mary's own request, a little black lap dog lay at her feet. When Darnley and Ruthven with his warlocks had crowded into the chamber and laid hands on Riccio, it was the little lap dog that had given the warning – a sharp growling yelp, hearing the clink of Ruthven's armour which he wore over his nightshirt. And when Fauldonside held Mary back with his pistol it was the same little dog which had bitten his leg and had had its life kicked out of its tiny body by his great boot. Riccio was dragged out, screaming, and hacked to pieces on the threshold. He never completed Ronsard's song, though often Mary heard his singing in dreams, heard it break off in terror as it had done when Ruthven stalked in pale as a corpse. When Darnley next day pretended sorrow for the murder she had said, her gold eyes

glittering terribly, 'You have done me such wrong, that neither the recollection of our early friendship, nor all the hope you can give me of the future can ever make me forget it.' Strangely enough it was not so much poor Riccio's terror-frozen eyes, she remembered, as the twisted lifeless body of a little black lap dog crushed beneath Fauldonside's heel and his pistol point pressing against her bosom. Two months later her son had been born.

Again there had been a little black lap dog in Kirk o' Field on the evening of Sunday, February 9th. Mary had left one of the dogs and a ring with the sick Darnley when she left with her torchbearers for Bastian's wedding. Darnley had shut himself away in Kirk o' Field, wearing a taffeta mask, until the small-pox scars should have healed. Long before day-break Kirk o' Field was in ruins. The explosion had shaken the entire neighbourhood. But the body of Darnley was not found among the smoking wreckage, nor was it disfigured by any trace of the explosion. He was found dead and cold at the foot of the gardens under a rowan, a little distance from the house. There was no wound upon his body. A cloth had been crammed in the mouth. By him lay two other corpses, the body of his valet and the body of a little black lap dog with its head crushed.

By this time Mary's lap dogs had become notorious, and when she was led to Edinburgh after Carberry, behind a great picture of the murdered Darnley, there were many in the crowd who shouted for her death by burning. She was a witch and her familiars

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dwelt in the little black dogs. A mob howled for her death round the Provost's house where she was imprisoned, and when she appeared at the window, haggard, her hair flying, her breasts bared, the crowd was moved to greater frenzy. 'Burn the whore! Burn the witch!' But there were others who walked away in silence, dumb and wondering.

But old Mignon was the last. She was old, blind in one eye, practically toothless, grey with age. What would happen to her after the next dawning? *O Domine Deus*. It was to be death at last. The beast that troubled the world — as Morgan called Elizabeth, had moved at last. Babington and the rest of the plotters had danced at Tyburn some three months before. Still she had delayed signing the warrant. But now it had been done. That grim puritan Lord Kent and Shrewsbury had been nominated to see that the warrant was enforced. Secretary Beale left London on Saturday morning with the order and letters for Kent and Shrewsbury. He had hardly bowed himself out of her presence before Elizabeth was saying that 'she wished it could be done in some other way that would not throw blame on her.' But Amyas Paulet had refused to see the queen's hint to have his prisoner quietly silenced, and Elizabeth's niggardliness had frustrated her offer to the Scots.

Beale arrived at Fotheringay on Sunday morning. He kept his mission secret, and Mary suspected there were to be more interminable questions. Kent came on Monday night, and Shrewsbury, looking ill and pale, on Tuesday morning. The Sheriff of

Northamptonshire had been commanded to be in attendance at day-break on Wednesday.

Kent, Beale and Shrewsbury were admitted to the presence of Mary on Tuesday afternoon. Even then she was still ignorant of their purpose. Barbara Mowbray, who had married her secretary, Curle, and whose child she herself had baptized, was in attendance. She was dressed, as usual, in the grey that became her so well. Mignon slept fretfully in her lap, stirring and whining softly in her sleep. Mary rose to meet them, putting the lap dog in a chair. Mary was six feet tall, and in spite of much severe illness and far more serious emotional and mental strain, carried herself as regally as ever. They bowed and Shrewsbury tried to stutter a greeting. Her quick bright eyes went over their faces. Beale would not face her glance. He fidgeted his papers. His feet shuffled nervously. Already he hated his task. Kent's face was wooden, stern and unbending, his eyes glassy. He saw a very wicked woman, who was about to receive a well-merited punishment. Protestant England would never be safe as long as this Catholic plotter lived. He would never shirk his duty, unpleasant though it was. Shrewsbury was stern too, but his eyes wavered. His face was pale. To him she was a woman who probably deserved death. The Babington plot had almost convinced him. But she was a woman, a woman who had fondled her little lap dogs, a woman who had played with and sung to his little grand-daughter when he had been her gaoler at Sheffield. Altogether she had been under his eyes for

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fourteen years, and in that time he had seen many little things which now made his eyes shrink and caused awkward misgivings. Perhaps she was an evil woman – she must be, the Queen of England could not be mistaken – but she was a woman, a woman, and he could not blind himself to that. Shrewsbury had always been chivalrous.

The silence was only one of seconds. But in that silence Mary's hopes collapsed beneath her, – the hopes which, in spite of her better judgment, had strengthened in the weeks that had elapsed since Babington had died. She heard and saw nothing. She did not hear Barbara Mowbray scream. She did not hear Kent's voice, cold and stern, exultant, delivering his awful message. She did not see Beale's shaking hands fumble with his tapes and papers and hold one before her eyes, – a paper with a heavy dangling seal. All was blackness, and roaring waters, as if the solid earth had dissolved beneath her feet. She did not see them leave. When next she recovered, she was in Barbara Mowbray's arms, dishevelled, shrieking that she would kill herself rather than suffer like a common trollop under the axe of an English headsman.

Beale and Kent and Shrewsbury shunned each other for the rest of the day. Each had a vision engraved indelibly on his memory – a woman writhing on the floor of her chamber screaming for mercy, a little black dog trying to lick a suddenly haggard face.

An hour later Mary was a queen again, writing poetry. *O Domine Deus, speravi in te!*

That night the queen 'supped very

sparingly,' as was her custom. When the brief but painful meal had come to an end she had all her servants called to her, and drank to their health and good fortune. When they, kneeling, pledged her 'their tears mingled with the wine.' She distributed the few personal things she possessed among them and then retired to her chamber with Jane Kennedy and Mignon. There she made her will and wrote letters, protesting her innocence of any murderous designs against the Queen of England, to her Confessor, to the King of France and to her cousin the Duc de Guise. She played a little with Mignon. Jane Kennedy read to her from her book of Hours. From then until four o'clock in the morning she prayed and read alternately. Exhausted, she threw herself on her bed and slept for two hours. But Mignon kept awake, her one good eye glowing like a coal. Mary slept, though of her dreams we know nothing. But once Jane Kennedy saw her smile and heard her murmur something in French.

During the night the carpenters had been at work in the great hall. They were building the scaffold, a little stage of oaken planks some three feet high, upon which the last act of the tragedy was to be performed. Occasionally the sound of their mallets reached the seclusion of Mary's chamber, making Jane Kennedy start and causing Mignon to lift her grey old head to listen uneasily. Mary did not appear to notice the sounds.

She was awakened at six o'clock, before it was light, and was dressed with more than ordinary care by her maids, Curle and Kennedy. Outside

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the wind had died and rain descended in a steady downpour. A calmness and a fortitude had taken possession of her. There was no hope. The end was as sure and certain as the dawn. It was inescapable. The turbulence and violence of life would end in two hours. An ugly death, – but she would die as she had lived, a good Papist and a Queen. She was as cold as ice, unexcited by any hope of reprieve or escape, untroubled by fear. So she dressed calmly, selecting each garment with meticulous care as a great actress might costume herself for her last appearance. She allowed Barbara Mowbray to brush and braid her long hair, grey now, and without its tints of auburn and gold. She felt like an actress among her tiring-women. All her life had been like a stage play. She had always been the tragic heroine. She had seen a favourite hacked to pieces at her bedroom door, had given birth to a weakling half-imbecile son, her husband had been assassinated, she had been raped by his murderer, had suffered the agony of a still-born child, had spent nineteen years in prison in a country she hated among a people who regarded her as a dangerous, Roman harlot whose delight lay in murder, blasphemy and whoredom. And now the final act – death by beheading at the order of her cousin. It was so perfect – full circle. After that – in two hours would come unutterable peace in the sweet calm of eternity. *O Domine Deus.*

Her servants had been called to her chamber. She read her will and then distributed all the clothes she had left. Many of them had never seen her so calm and possessed as on that morning.

They knelt and she gave them her blessing. Each kissed her hand in turn. When she bade them farewell, it was they who broke down.

She dismissed her attendants and retired alone to her little oratory. On her knees before the altar she prayed – was it a plea for forgiveness, or a pæan of rejoicing that peace was coming at last? That is something we may not know. Nor shall we know what strange faces she saw in the flames of the burning candles, or what voices spoke to her from the shadows behind the altar.

As she knelt there was a sound at her feet. Something touched and rustled her gown. It was old Mignon who had followed her mistress disconsolately into the oratory. It was the little dog which broke down her fortitude. She could not keep back the tears now. Mignon was faithful, the last of a faithful breed. The rest of them lay dead in a score of places, one at Holyrood, another at Kirk o' Field, one at Carberry, still another in the gardens at Sheffield. Old Mignon was left. She was very old, worn-out, a tiny bag of bones, life scarcely a spark. How she lived her mistress never knew. She had eaten practically nothing for the last month, refusing to be tempted with the most delicate flesh. Mignon loved her mistress, and hers was not the love of a flatterer or the love of a courtier. In her old veins ran the blood of a noble French breed. Mignon was the last. At every point in her life Mary saw a little black lap-dog. Mignon's tiny body, lighter than air, fragile as a feather, was to mark the end. A spirit paw would stretch out and touch her in oblivion. Mignon was faithful.

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At eight o'clock when the Sheriff entered and told her that the hour had come, Mignon had disappeared. She rose, and carrying her ivory crucifix preceded him, and was joined in the ante-room by Kent and Shrewsbury and Beale, Paulet and Drury.

A few steps farther Mary found her path blocked by Sir Robert Melville, her house steward, who had been denied access to her since the unmasking of the Babington plot. The old man was utterly broken and in tears. He knelt before her. Sobs prevented his speech. She put a hand on his shoulder and Shrewsbury heard her say in perfectly calm tones, 'My good Melville, do not lament, rather rejoice that thou shalt see a final period put to Mary Stuart's troubles. The world is naught but vanity and subject to more sorrow than an ocean of tears can wash away.' And as she passed on, 'Farewell my dear friend. Pray for thy mistress and queen.'

It was then that she noticed that her chaplain de Preau was not among the party, nor were any of her ladies. She asked why they were not present. She wished them to be with her at the scaffold, she said. Kent replied that he could not grant her request, he was 'afraid they might put some superstitious trumpery into practice, perhaps there would be a dipping of handkerchiefs in her grace's blood, and other Papist performances which would be offensive to God and to all decent Christians.' Mary said she would vouch for their behaviour and obedience. Still Kent demurred. 'Surely,' she said, 'you might grant a greater favour than this, though I were a woman of less rank than the

Queen of Scots.' Kent remained silent, unwilling to budge an inch for this Catholic plotter, and the others dare not give way on their own initiative. Mary's eyes flashed, and she spoke with some heat. 'Am I not cousin to your Queen,' she said, 'descended from the royal blood of Henry VII, a married Queen of France and anointed Queen of Scotland, yet you deny my last request.'

At length, after much consultation, and with very ill-grace, they allowed Melville and her physician, Barbara Mowbray and Jane Kennedy to accompany her to the scaffold.

Outside the walls more than a thousand people had gathered, for the news of the impending execution had spread far and wide. They stood in silence in the heavy rain, waiting for the bell and waiting to hear the Sheriff announce that justice had been done and Protestant England was safe once more. Inside the hall a great log fire hissed and crackled in the wide-open chimney. Three hundred knights and gentlemen of the district had been admitted.

The little black stage, some ten or twelve feet square, was now ready for the final act. It had been railed off and the Sheriff's halberdiers in helmets and steel corselets were on guard to keep back the crowd. Upon the stage stood the block, a cushion and a stool, all draped in black. The axe stood by a rail. At the back of the scaffold the Tower headsmen and his assistant waited, black, masked and silent. There was a buzz of conversation in the hall. But when Mary entered on the arm of one of the Sheriff's officers there was a sudden and profound silence,

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broken only by the spitting of the burning logs, and once by a terrible crash as a man fainted at the back of the chamber

Mary was in her forty-fifth year. Nineteen years of imprisonment had aged her considerably. But the woman who entered the great hall of Fotheringay, walking erect and firmly was no old woman. It was the Queen of Scots of twenty years before. The stoop, which had bowed her shoulders for a dozen years had gone. Her carriage was firm and regal. The skin of her face was white and unlined, smooth as marble. Her eyes were golden, flashing with light. Her fair hair glinted and shone with the auburn tints which had driven Brantôme into raptures when she was sixteen. It was a transformation which left the crowd gasping and amazed.

She had dressed very carefully, discarding her customary grey for a long robe and jacket of black satin, trimmed and slashed with velvet. From her golden hair and falling over her back to the ground hung a veil of finest lawn. She carried her ivory crucifix. Jewelled paternosters hung at her girdle.

It was like the entrance of a great actress. The audience was stunned. She stood for a moment and looked over the company, even smiled, before seating herself on the stool. She was absolutely composed.

Shrewsbury and Kent, stern and white, took their places. Mr. Secretary Beale stepped upon the scaffold and read the warrant aloud, though the sound of his voice could be heard only by those nearest the rails, and when his quavering mumble ceased only a few

joined in with the customary, 'God save Queen Elizabeth.'

During the reading of the warrant Mary sat perfectly motionless staring straight in front of her, without a tremor or movement of any kind. Not a muscle stirred in that still, white face. Indeed she appeared so little affected that Shrewsbury at the conclusion of Beale's performance approached her nervously with, 'Madam, you hear what we are commanded to do?'

'Certainly,' was the calm reply, 'certainly I hear, my lord, and you will do your duty.'

She rose from the stool and was on the point of sinking to her knees when Doctor Fletcher, the Dean of Peterborough Cathedral, whose Protestant conscience refused to let him see this woman die in the obnoxious Roman faith without attempting to conquer her perversion, stepped forward. He urged her to 'repent her sins, settle her faith in Christ, by Him to be saved,' and not die 'in a state of most damnable heresy.'

'Trouble not thyself, Master Dean. I am settled in my faith, for which I mean to shed my blood.'

But Fletcher had been instructed by Kent to foil any Papist demonstration on Mary's part with the thunders of the true faith. He commenced a prayer in English in which some of the congregation joined. Mary turned her back on him, knelt and prayed loudly in Latin, interspersed with phrases of English. The audience ceased their half-hearted intonation and stared open mouthed at the duel between the Queen of Scots and Master Fletcher. As Fletcher stammered and hesitated, Mary's voice strengthened. It could

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be heard all over the hall. Disgusted at the exhibition, Shrewsbury finally ordered the Dean to stop, and Mary prayed alone, changing her Latin for English so that the company might understand. Kent's face whitened and writhed. But it would have been unseemly to stop her.

'As thy arms, O Jesu, were stretched upon the cross, so receive me O God into the arms of thy mercy.'

She raised the ivory crucifix to her lips. As she kissed it Kent's pious soul revolted. He could contain his indignation no longer.

'Madam,' he remonstrated, 'you had better put such Popish trumpery out of your hand and carry Christ in your heart.'

But the heretic retaliated perfectly calmly and with a good deal of fire, 'I can hardly bear this emblem in my hand without, at the same time, bearing Him in my heart.' Kent was silenced. He flushed and bit his lip. Instead of proving the victim the woman was the master of the proceedings.

When she rose the two executioners stepped forward, and kneeling, begged her forgiveness.

Still she remained calm. Kent wondered when her spirit would break.

'I do forgive you,' she said, 'for now I hope you shall end all my troubles.'

Her ladies came upon the platform. In dead silence they began to assist her in the last preparations. Her black robe was removed, the lawn veil taken away, the black jacket. Beneath, Mary wore a long crimson velvet underdress. A pair of crimson velvet sleeves were put on her arms. Barbara Mowbray bound up her golden eyes

with a handkerchief of cambric 'all wrought over with gold needlework.'

The effect of this transformation—the tall woman in crimson between the black figures of the headsman, was appalling. The audience gasped, stunned and spell-bound. Her own women, who up to now had observed silence, burst into moaning and sobbing. Mary appeared to be the only calm person in the hall. 'Ne criez vous, J'ay promis pour vous,' she said. She kissed them.

The headsman led her to the block. She knelt on the square black cushion. She placed her hands beneath her neck. The assistant removed them gently. He held them. The headsman struck. A man in the hall shrieked and shrieked. The blow merely severed the skin. Blood ran over the white shoulders. Mary did not wince, or move. He struck again. Another blow was necessary before the head was completely severed. The headsman held up the trophy. It was a strange face which stared down upon the crowd. It was the face of an old woman, wrinkled and haggard; the hair grey and faded. The golden plaits, the auburn-tinted coif lay on the scaffold. They were false.

'So perish all enemies of the queen,' stammered Master Fletcher. One voice responded with the 'Amen.' It was the voice of Kent. The rest were silent. *O Domine Deus, speravi in te! O Domine Deus!*

Upon the scaffold the body was stripped like that of a common malefactor. All the clothing was to be destroyed, so that there should be no Popish trumpery of keeping tokens.



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When the corpse was touched there was a movement beneath, and a tiny whimpering cry. A little black lap dog crawled out when the crimson dress was moved. It crept and lay between the head and shoulders, whimpering. Its long black hair, patched with grey, was sticky with blood. Mignon was faithful.

When Elizabeth was notified that the Queen of Scots was dead, she sent for Sir Christopher Hatton, 'and with an appearance of wonderful grief, told him that she had never commanded, or intended *that thing*.' And a week later her conscience permitted her to write to Mary's son, 'I would you knew the extreme dolour that overwhelms my mind for that miserable accident—which, far contrary to my meaning hath befallen.'

### IV

There is one further echo, faint as an echo must be when it comes from the grave, but none the less quite unmistakable.

James had been nine years king of England, reigning fearfully at Westminster in his thick daggerproof

doublets and enormous quilted breeches. He had nothing of his mother's character, ugly where she was beautiful, weak where she was strong, mean where she was generous. He was more than half-imbecile. He was spindle-shanked. His spine was crooked. His tongue was too large for his mouth. His eyes goggled. He went in fear of assassination all his life, which made him secretive, vicious and distrustful even of his friends. His brain ran in quaint and outlandish twists. He wrote some extraordinary rubbish about witches and tobacco. He was obsessed with his own divinity. Altogether he was regarded by the rest of Europe as a rather curious animal these eccentric English kept on their throne.

In 1612 the grave at Peterborough was opened. The remains were to be taken to Henry VII.'s chapel at Westminster where a costly tomb had been prepared. When the labourers had broken into the grave they discovered a small handful of dry bones at the foot of the casket. The bones were crumbling, dry and unrecognizable—a handful of dust. They were brushed to one side when the coffin was raised, and ground to powder beneath the feet of the workmen.

# The Market

by H. Ide

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WE are beginning, at last, to speak of 'the hard times' with that note of faint pride in miseries shared in common that I remember in talk about air raids during the war, and which was heard in Irish voices when they spoke of 'the troubles.' Certainly I am grateful to these 'hard times' for considerable heart-warming entertainment and much pleasant food. For the times, aided by affectionate memories of housekeeping in America, France and Italy, have driven me to buying food from the open stalls and barrows of a street market in a foreign quarter near my home. Is there any other city so like a chequer-board as London? London, with its dark square of slum behind each white square of fashionable, comfortable or business quarter, as if the great city vainly tried to remind us that we are members one of another, and that the poor are with us still. (It comforts me, however, to think that the poor of this neighbourhood, Latin peoples who appreciate good food, can get it very cheaply here for the mere trouble of choosing it themselves, which they enjoy, and by carrying it away. And it comes fresh from Covent Garden and other great exchanges of produce every morning, pushed on barrows by the patient vendors.)

My market sprawls all along one side of a narrow street and round a corner into another. It has been allowed to establish itself, taking advantage of English *laissez faire*, in a particularly unsuitable spot; a car or lorry can just wedge itself in and crawl along between the backs of the stalls and the opposite curb. I am always expecting to see a slice taken off the comfortable behind of the enormous man who sells fish, which he erroneously describes, at the top of a voice as enormous as his figure, as 'All alive-O!'

Though the purchasers are mostly foreigners, there are only a few stalls which are not served by the purest Cockneys. I wonder if their English conservatism allows them to eat the unusual things they sell? Here, to my great delight, are piles of American sweet corn, their rows of pearly kernels hidden in a delicate green husk and a tangle of 'silk', waiting to be eaten, in the proper but indecorous way, as one plays a mouth-organ. There is the rich purple aubergine of France, the red peppers of Italy, which are so appetizing stuffed with English prawns, even the young octopuses, beloved of Italians and others with a taste for eating pleasantly-flavoured rubber tyres. I have not yet dared to offer

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them to an English party. In this market the vegetable marrow is never found as the proud English gardener loves to grow it, a monster which will, such is his secret and wicked ambition, lie at the foot of the steps and trip up the visiting clergyman as he rounds the difficult turn by the font in the Harvest Festival Procession. Here it is slain, as it should be, in its six-inch infancy, ready to be cooked with Parmesan cheese in the Italian manner. Here the lovely grapes of South Africa can be found, on a lucky day, for eight-pence a pound; the Avocada pears from the Argentine wait to grace a salad beside the delicious cherimoya from Chili, whose flavour is that of strawberries mingled with pineapple. And all for a few pence each. They are a pretty sight, these fruit and flower stalls, with their pyramids of colour glowing in the sunlight and seeming to store a little of it, even on a rainy day or when the acetylene flares burn and blow and cast strange shadows after darkness falls. I often think, uncomfortably, that my economies and pleasures are gained at the expense of a hard life for the sellers. What is the incidence of rheumatism, I wonder, for these people whose meagre canvas roofs offer a very inadequate shelter from sun and rain and none at all from frost and wind? Yet they seem a cheery lot, on the whole, calling out jests to each other even at the end of a long, inclement day. Perhaps most of them are hardened to it from childhood; even from babyhood. At least the Italian woman who sells National Mark eggs remained at work till the day before her baby was born, and reappeared a week later with her baby

beside her in its pram, well covered, it is true, but still exposed for long hours to the rigours of a frosty, foggy January. Yet he seems to be thriving on it. The drought that has been such a curse to the villages has been a comfort to the street market, yet last winter was exceptionally cold, and this summer unusually hot, so I suppose they are losing on the swings what they gained on the roundabouts.

There is only one permanently cross face in my market, and that is a pity, for it began as a pretty one. But sharp dealing has sharpened every feature of this woman, and made her manner permanently defensive and irritable. She is the only coster who persistently sells bad fruit from the back of her stall, even to old customers. I am no customer of hers, twice was enough for me, as I told her, and left her volubly furious, but I see her serving others in the same way. They all do it, but with most of the others it is not bad fruit, only less good. And if one goes regularly, as I do, and is friendly, as it is very easy to be, one is soon given the best fruit from the top of the pyramid or even allowed, this is a great market compliment, to pick out the peaches with which one's eye has fallen in love. In this, as in so many other English matters, I am reminded of Kipling's delicate study in nationality, *An Habitation Enforced*, and of how his Americans, settled in the Sussex countryside, find that they can do no better than follow the old family motto of their English ancestors, 'Wayte Awhile.' Give them time to get used to you, even to like you, and these Cockneys will sell you their fruit at almost any price that you are able

## The Market

to pay, the flower-sellers will divide their bunches, at the cost of some trouble and dampness, so that you can buy the tuppence worth that is all you need to complete some pet plan of flower arrangement for your table. That most touching trait of the Irish and English poor, an indifference to money, has made me, not of set plan, indeed against my will and temperament, into an all but Latin bargainer. Bargaining is not really supposed to be the rule of the market; all the piles are marked. (The trick of writing the 'half' in the notice '6*d.* a half pound' very small, so that from a distance it looks like '6*d.* a pound' can hardly be called deception, it is so well understood.) I don't wish or mean to bargain, but I do. I stop at a stall to buy six lemons, and the owner, a cheery, unshaven, little rough-coated terrier of a man says "ave a nice pine?"

'No,' I answer quite truthfully, 'I don't want a pineapple enough to pay two shillings for it.'

'Oh, then, taik it for one and six.'

'But I don't want it for one and six.'

'Well, what *do* you want to pay?'

'Oh, not more than a shilling. I really don't want to buy a pineapple at all.'

"Ere, taik two for 'arf-a-crahn,' cries my friendly tormentor, and, before I can wink, has pitched them into my basket.

'No, no,' I protest, laughing and indignant, 'I'm not catering for a restaurant.'

'Oh, very well, 'ere's a nice one for a bob, - and I didn't mean to be rude.'

'I know,' I say reassuringly, and

add penitently, 'and I didn't mean to beat you down, I just didn't want a pineapple if I had to pay more than a shilling for it.'

'That's h'all right,' with a sudden beam, 'You're a friend o' mine, and, h'anyrate, I wants to get rid of 'em.'

To-day I am regretting my success in bargaining and my general weakness for the market people. A fine, tall, upstanding man with a beautiful gypsy face, whom I had never seen before, stood a little way outside the market, with fresh-killed plover, tied in some mysterious and skilful manner, hanging from a cut stick, like an ancient tally. His looks, his persuasiveness, the conviction that they must have been poached (a thing that always appeals to my lawless American heart), made me linger till I had reduced their price from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 10*d.* each, but it also made me believe him about how easy they would be to pluck. A handful of breast feathers came off like magic in his skilful fingers. But *I* have been wrestling for a whole afternoon with wing feathers and the down on the neck, which seems to have been buckled on with 'hoops of steel.'

There is a time when no stall vendor is amiable, and that is when you try to make a small purchase early in the morning. I think there must be a superstition that, if your first sale is a mean one, all the others that day will be the same. I once tried to buy  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a pound of mushrooms for seasoning early one Friday morning. No one would sell them to me. It was maddening to see them there, fresh and oyster-pink, and not to be able to get them. One man declared that he had no weight

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smaller than  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. When I picked up his 4 oz weight he was very indignant. So I lost *my* temper, too, and hastily invented a superstition of my own. 'Don't you know,' I cried, 'that if you refuse the first customer who asks you on a *Friday* morning, you will have no luck all day?' Only half convinced, but afraid to defy these new gods, the  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. was ungraciously put into a bag and I carried it off in triumph.

My little terrier of a man told me what I think must be the great romance of my market. Things were quiet and we both had a few minutes to spare. I told him how good a melon he had sold me had been. 'Well, I likes to please a good customer,' he replied, 'but do you know, there was a lidy comes 'ere in a great Chrysler car and leaves it just in the street there. *You* know what a Chrysler car costs!' I made noises to show that I was suitably impressed. 'Well, hup she comes and she says "'ow much are them lemons?" "Two a penny," I says. "'Ow quaint!" says she. "Put two in a bag and deliver them to my car." "Beggin' your pardon, lidy," says I, "but slavery went out in England in 1850 and you can taik 'em yourself." "You are very impertinent, my man," says she, "an' I shall report you to an hofficer." Sure enough, back she comes with a copper. "This lidy says you was rude to 'er," says 'e, "what 'ave you got ter sai?" "Well," says h'I, "'h'I didn't mean ter be rude, but she harsks me to deliver two lemons for a penny to 'er car and I says she can take 'em 'erself." The copper 'e just jerked 'is thumb over 'is shoulder and says, "'ere, you taik your car out

o' this street or I'll 'ave you hup for hobstruction.'" Thus I felt, as I listened, were folktales created; here was the triumph of poverty over riches, of industry over idleness. How much more entertaining these independent people are, of both sexes and all ages, owning their poor means of livelihood, able to say what they think and to lose money if they wish rather than submit to discourtesy, than are the rows of polite young ladies, all with plucked eyebrows and crimson finger-nails, who 'serve' us in the provision department of Messrs. Harridge's Giant Stores.

Last autumn it was proved to me that I had been judged and had found my level in the market. Toward the end of September I was buying one of the deliciously sweet, dark-green honeydew melons from my rough-coated terrier. As he dropped it into my basket he remarked regretfully, 'The *real* toffs, once hoysters is hin, they won't *look* at a melon!' I couldn't resist repeating this remark to my luncheon guests, though it reflected little honour on me or my meal.

But, though he regrets my lack of genuine toffhood, I feel that my Cockney terrier is not without a certain admiration and affection for me, for "ere you are, my little cock-sparrer!" he cried, the other day, as he tipped costard apples into my basket. This description of my middle-aged, none too slender and very obviously female self convulsed the young friend who was with me, but I have added it to my valued store of pleasant if incongruous compliments. It was, however, a better description of the speaker. Poor, plucky little London cock-sparrow, may he never lack for crumbs!

# Morning in Seville

by H. M. Tomlinson

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OUR Spanish bus may have been right, necessity being what it is with speed to match it, in hurrying from cathedral to cathedral. It was doing its best within the limit allowed. It gave us cause one day to see that if our journey had been straight from Victoria Station to Seville, allowing us ten minutes to stand beside the first shaft within the cathedral's principal door, that would have been reward enough.

Seville's haughty fabric is restorative. It is a testimony above challenge to the quality of the commonalty. It is sovereign but impersonal. It suggests no fine names. The tomb of Columbus is there, but it is as incidental as a cardinal's hat which hangs from the shadows like a big red spider on a thread. The hat is anonymous. Kings are hidden there, but they have less to do with it now than the old man in mediæval dress conducting a file of choristers across the vast floor like a black-beetle with a line of tiny white moths fluttering after him.

A priest in heavy vestments is before the altar of a chapel, and kneeling behind him are a few women and one man. A group of tourists is whispering and staring about. A beggar importunes. Music is drifting somewhere from the heart of it. The varied life out of which the cathedral rose con-

tinues to circulate in it; the ascent of the masonry is still tense with the vigour which sent it aloft.

You cannot see to what hidden expansions the aisles lead, nor to what height the shafting lifts, but there is a sense of the universal in unity. You know men can do well. They did this. The joy of their various crafts is in the soaring lines of the rock, the foliation of ironwork, the extravagance of the wood-carving. Generation after generation of them, in their conviction of a right and single purpose, brought about miraculously this show of intrinsic human values.

The majesty of Seville's old sign of the integrity of the populace is above the edicts, bulls, prescriptions, enactments, impositions and requisitions of kings, cabinets, popes, dictators, presidents, or what not. All that is reduced to litter. One never did fully trust those notables, nor ever feel sure their commands were directed to welfare. But there is nothing strange in that. What is strange and important is that of late we have lost faith in the nobodies who did such work as this cathedral. That is another and more serious matter.

To lose faith in our fellows is to empty earth of meaning. If it is without meaning then it is absurd to maintain hope for civilization, because

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there is no value in a social virtue which is inapplicable to society. What would a simple priest do if one day he knew his candle lighted only a hollow?

And it is easy to-day to lose faith in the crowd, and to cease to expect resolute intelligence and intrepid fellowship to come from that. The appearance of our docile neighbour in a dutiful gas-mask will do the trick, following that recent kindly official instruction, bearing the Royal coat-of-arms, to cover our garden, and if possible the house-roof, in case of need, with a thick layer of soot and chloride of lime against the fall of a ghastly dew from heaven which blinds, and rots the lungs. It is as if you saw above your neighbour's collar, or in the portrait of a premier, not the face of a man, but a death's head. Common-sense is horrified. Is this real? Then those eye-sockets mock human effort. We must find the courage to admit it.

Brains have turned to blow-flies if in the common routine of the home we must see we get our anti-vesicant and chloride of lime with the bread and butter, and beside the infant's cot at night leave with our blessing and the doll the babe's dear little gas-mask. The Magi never thought of that gift.

When life falls to imbecility it would be better to blot it out; let the desert come. Our present casual indifference to corruption lying at the very brink of the fount of life; our acceptance of diabolism as a natural stink and infection in the heart of the commune, no more avoidable than rain on Christmas Day, would show that mind has ceased its aspiration to light and loveliness, being foul.

Must we accept that? Is the gener-

ous spirit gone which shaped the cathedrals? Sometimes it seems so. The surrender of the multitudes everywhere, apathetic and disheartened, to governance which announces its purpose to refine from knowledge and intelligence all surprises till there issues only a uniform and reliable drive for national machinery, and to throw mercy to the dogs, has made some of us wonder whether in future democracy will have more power to will its orientation than sheep have in the choice of a slaughter-house

And if there is to be always a likelihood that any night, and without notice, our bodies may be turned into slime, and the inventions and work of centuries to trash, because statesmen on appeal can see nothing better to do with them, then it might be fun to be anarchs, and spend what good things we have in one jolly burst, one last orgy, while the opportunity is yet unsloughed by chemicals, rather than wait to drop off like greenfly under an insecticide.

That is where we are to-day. To that dead-end have the devices of Europe's leaders brought the people of a continent. Is there any testimony to justify our trust in those men, as a cathedral stands for the value of the mob? There is. The craft and creative energy of statesmen for generations in organizing victory is a mountain of war-debts so high that nobody knows where in the clouds it ends. They did that.

So appalling a monument, quite shapeless, for it cannot be pictured, and so obstructive to the sun that things will not grow under it, is the testimony to their genius for building; though they

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hint that they are preparing the base for a greater one ; yet honestly admit, at present, that destruction next time may not afford them sufficient material to carry on national war before eternal night, in which there will be nobody either to admire or hang them, puts an end to their enterprize.

That can only mean that we may throw hope to the dogs, as our leaders have thrown mercy, but for one thing. It is not democracy which has failed, but the statesmen. Their Promised Land turns out to be the Wilderness, but they know of no way out; they propose instead that we should be suitable wolves. Democracy has never been tried; it has been only fooled.

Luckily, we know that the good nature of ordinary folk readily responds to the simple and magnanimous appeal, if it come. They are the last to be corrupted. The common man, almost always, is a kindly and helpful fellow. The power of a government is never complete without his corruption or subjection, for power has no continuance but in the credulity and obedience of the simple.

If simple men cannot save us, then

we are lost. What they could do with a revivifying idea Seville's great fabric is the sign. It is, in the bulk, the work of nameless men. Even its architects are unknown.

It is a testimony to the fellow who had a good thought to make manifest with his hands while living on bread and onions. There was an army of them, for a century and more, labouring at this. They must have had conflicting interests, but the job reconciled all. They could not expect to see the sun upon their completed task, nor hear applause for its success.

Some quarried the rock, others set the masonry, or carved timber, or made the glass, or hammered tendrils of leaves for the bronze and iron gates. They were all in it, foresters, quarrymen, blacksmiths, builders, priests and architects, hewers of wood and drawers of water. They believed in something and meant to give it form.

There it is now, and there is no more to be said about it than there is of great music. Harmonious and triumphant, it attests to the power of a transfiguring conviction, and not of war, but of peace.



# Aunt Felicia

by H. H. Bashford

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AMONGST my earliest recollections of the material universe is that of a slightly extended forefinger – as I afterwards knew it to be – describing circles of a diminishing and approaching circumference and finally burying itself in my pectoral garments with an extremely pleasant sensation. It was accompanied by sounds equally agreeable that began to define themselves, in the process of years, as two words spoken just deliberately enough to have escaped being a drawl. The words were Wer-iggy, wer-iggy; and I presently realized that they were uttered by a person who was always the same person and who was ultimately to become recognized by me as Aunt Wiggy-wiggy. She was the oldest, I discovered, of four maiden ladies who periodically appeared and called my mother Eleanor. They were her sisters, it seemed, and their names were Felicia, Caroline, Rose and Ruth. Aunt Wiggy-wiggy was Felicia, and, by the time I had grasped this, she must have been something over forty.

Later I was to learn that, in the Mayfair rectory, where they had all been children together and afterwards young women, she had assumed the privileges of seniority in no uncertain fashion; and the temperamental gulfs

that this had deepened between them were never to be wholly bridged. But the conversation of my aunts was seldom personal; none of them had any small talk at all; and it was not until Aunt Felicia was dead that the youngest of her sisters – herself over seventy then – referred to these matters.

Not even my mother, for instance, had ever hinted – such things were not talked about – that their own mother had been unhappy, or that their father, worshipped in fear as the life-long rector of London's most distinguished church, had never quite overcome, in his relations with her, a sense of social inferiority. There had apparently not been love enough, although she had borne him seven children, to make this possible under Victorian canons; and when she had died, though he had continued to preach his unimpassioned, scholarly sermons and to officiate at the weddings of peers and statesmen in the only church then thought possible for such ceremonies, the rectory had become merely an office, with five secluded young women keeping out of sight till the butler sounded the gong for meals.

For the first few years governesses had been included in the household; the sisters were taught to paint and play the piano; and there were occa-

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sional visits for tea in the nursery from maternal aunts and cousins. But their elder brother, who was studying to be an engineer, never ventured to bring any of his friends home; the younger had died after a year or two at Harrow and a few months in lodgings at Torquay; and the five sisters had grown up in an isolation where they were entirely dependent upon their own imaginative resources – where they were necessarily at the mercy, without means of escape, of each other's habits and idiosyncrasies; to which music and books were admitted, but never the people who wrote or discussed them; in which the problems of sex and its natural desires were unthinkably beyond contemplation; into which no young man was ever invited, or probably even thought of attempting to penetrate; and in which they were as ignorant of their contemporary social world as if they had been living in an Eskimo settlement.

Aunt Felicia was still in her teens when this *régime* had closed down upon them and a woman of over thirty when it came to an end. But, as the eldest of the family, she had at least enjoyed advantages that were never to be shared by her younger sisters. For two or three years after her mother had died, and before her father gave up entertaining altogether, she had been allowed to preside at an occasional dinner-party and return calls in her mother's stead. More than any of my other aunts too, she had inherited from her mother certain seigneurial characteristics – the upright carriage, indomitable blue eyes, and aquiline features of a once land-owning family; and although, when I first became aware of

her as a separate person, she was actually living in a bed-sitting-room at Croydon, it was not very long before I began to recognize in her something that set her apart from my other aunts.

Had fate willed otherwise, had she become the mistress of acres for which nature had so obviously designed her – for which as a girl, indeed, her birth and good looks might so reasonably have persuaded her that she was destined – this might easily have embraced, as I afterwards saw, a certain element of tyranny. But the dreams, if they had existed, had long ago died. I doubt if they had ever been mourned. And anyway, for a small boy, to whom she was still Aunt Wiggy-wiggy, such perceptions were not yet on the horizon.

It had not even occurred to me that she was poor; that all my other aunts were poor. Poor persons were different. Aunt Felicia occasionally mentioned them and evidently did not include herself in their number. By then we also, my mother and brother and I, were living in three rooms in a place called Shepherd's Bush. But money was a subject that was never referred to, or so I divined, by people who were not the poor. It was something mysteriously allotted by God, like the shape of people's noses or impediments in the speech – too personal and private to be discussed with decency; it was only the vulgar who were inquisitive about money.

It was not until I had grown up, therefore, that I learned the financial history of all that happened since my grandfather's death – how the five sisters, sufficiently provided for, but with no practical knowledge of how to use independence, had continued to live

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together almost automatically in a large house near Gloucester Road. This had been taken for them, it seemed, by their elder brother – of whom Aunt Felicia was a blind adorer – and here they had lived much as before for the next two or three years. Occasionally, as in their rectory days, they had gone to concerts and picture galleries. More occasionally still, they had visited their country cousins. But for the rest they had continued to paint and play the piano, to read aloud and sing glees – ‘White sands and grey sands. Who’ll buy my white sands? Who’ll buy my gre-c-ey sands?’

By an astonishing chance, however, an elderly widower had then happened to meet and marry my mother; and it was in the year after the wedding that the sisters had met with their final calamity. Not only had their elder brother, who was their sole trustee, lost all his own property and his wife’s, but, with the exception of a small mortgage belonging to my Aunt Ruth, that of his five sisters as well. Whether this was due to his fault or his folly – Aunt Felicia would never admit it to be either – I was never to learn; and indeed I regarded him as a rather heroic and attractive figure. Following my father’s death, when I was three years old, and before our own financial collapse when I was seven, he was an occasional visitor at our Kensington house; and he once gave me a purse that he had brought home from Morocco. But I never saw him again; he had apparently left his eighteen-year-old wife to bring up her baby as best she could; and although I cherished the purse through most of my schooldays, it was ultimately ex-

changed, I believe, for a volume by Mr. Henty.

Of the five sisters, therefore, in the year of Queen Victoria’s jubilee, my mother, who had eighty pounds a year, was the richest, though not quite so affluent perhaps as my Aunt Ruth, whose income was twenty pounds less but who had no sons to educate. Aunt Felicia, Aunt Caroline and Aunt Rose were, in the strictest sense of the word, penniless save in so far as they had been able to realize their precise value in the world’s labour market. Since they had never been to school, or passed an examination, this was not of course extravagant. Aunt Caroline, Aunt Rose and Aunt Ruth, by virtue of their gentility and comparative youth, had become inexpensive governesses in what Aunt Felicia would have termed – but only if she had been asked – middle-class households. And Aunt Felicia herself, facing the world at forty, and without the remotest idea how to cook or clean anything, had taken an unfurnished room in a back street of Croydon as a teacher of painting and drawing.

If Aunt Felicia, therefore, had ever wielded the sceptre, as looking back I can well believe, her sceptre days had been buried, when I first knew her, with whatever dreams she may have had in girlhood. It was true that, when two or three of my aunts were gathered together, there was never any doubt as to which of them had once been queen. But in later life, at any rate, Aunt Felicia was a realist who never wasted emotion upon what had happened yesterday. If Providence had seen fit to remove her sisters’ incomes, well that was that; they must all do

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the best they could. Had her own income not been removed as well, it would have been her unquestioned duty, of course, to provide for them; and, as the eldest of the family and physically the strongest, there could naturally have been no other administrator. But Providence had decided otherwise; and it would never have occurred to her, even remotely, to question its wisdom. Though she never discussed religion as my mother did, she had been brought up in the Anglican Church; and in spite of a freshness of outlook that never faded, her religious convictions remained a closed chapter. They had been settled once for all. Religion, like sex, was not a thing to be talked about.

That being so then, her task had become plain and would probably occupy an indefinite number of years. If she could no longer govern her sisters, she must at least never become a burden upon them, or upon anybody else for the matter of that. Nor did she, although she was to live to be eighty-nine and see all but one of them into their graves; and from the first week in Croydon she had imposed upon herself the discipline of saving up for an eventual annuity. As Aunt Ruth in her own seventies gently reflected, it must have been a hard and thrifty ordeal; and exactly how hard and how severely thrifty nobody but Aunt Felicia was ever to know. But she had steadfastly refused to accept help from anybody, and her pride – if that was the name for it – did not meet with a substantial fall. Her talent for painting was real, if a little sentimental; she had obtained a post in a neighbouring school; and she enjoyed the flawless

health of a necessarily abstemious life, though she had the appetite of a school-boy when opportunity offered.

Moreover, she had certain assets of which she was either unaware or took completely for granted. For all the seclusion of her Mayfair upbringing, she was a born adventurer entirely without fear; and in the direst contrivances to which poverty compelled her, she never exhibited the slightest *gêne*. Thus I have a remembrance of her, when she must have been about sixty-eight and coming to stay with my wife and myself, serenely dragging a large trunk along the pavement of our Hampstead street. She had already dragged it along another on her way from the local station. But why not? It had been perfectly simple. Her eyebrows had arched themselves above her sea-blue eyes. She was in plenty of time, and why should she have spent a shilling upon an outside porter?

She had always possessed the gift too – or at any rate as long as I had known her – of completely identifying herself with her surroundings without abating a jot of her own private principles or perceiving the necessity for so doing. That was one of her reasons, I think, why landladies and their servants, not to say children, so instantly liked her. If she carried herself like a *grand dame*, as she undoubtedly did, it was because she really was one, whatever she happened to be doing; and her interest in the concerns of others was as entirely devoid of sham as it was scrupulous in respecting even the smallest boy's point of view. That was one of the lessons, perhaps, that she had learned in adversity; and it became

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more marked as the years went by. But it had already made her, when I was a boy at school, as good a companion as an aunt might be expected to be.

By then we were living in the Midlands in a small country town, famous for the cheapness of its education; and Aunt Felicia, the Croydon school having been disbanded, had become housekeeper-governess in the family of a widower at Norwich. But she stayed with us periodically, paying for her board, and although she was an occasional source of personal embarrassment, she was always ready to admit, after a momentary blue stare, that this was due to her own ignorance. However handsome, for instance, she might consider the cricket captain, just then engaged in compiling fifty runs, it would be quite impossible for me, being in the lower third, to effect an introduction when his innings was over. He wouldn't even know who I was myself. But did that matter? Yes, it mattered exceedingly. Well, he *was* handsome, wasn't he? And since she had conceded my point, I was content to admit hers.

She had also, about this time, learned to ride a tricycle; and I suffered a good deal from her enthusiastic insistence that we should go for rides together upon a hired machine built for the purpose of accommodating two. This was difficult to refuse, as I was known to be fond of tricycling, and she always paid the man at the shop; and although I piloted her out of the town as quickly as possible, it was seldom without escaping observation. When we rode tandem, I was to some extent able, of course, to ignore that an

aunt happened to be behind me. But unfortunately she preferred a machine, known as a 'sociable', of which the occupants rode side by side. This was not only unwieldy on account of its immense breadth, necessitating long pauses in the presence of traffic, but it implied a deliberateness in the choice of one's companion from which there was no possible escape. Finally, having run the gauntlet, in what should have been an empty side-street, of some members of my form and a portion of the second eleven, I succeeded in wrecking this machine, to my intense relief, without damaging Aunt Felicia.

But for idle hours at home or upon a country holiday Aunt Felicia was always a dependable person. Having made her mistakes, she seldom repeated them, and she never forgot the names of my friends. This was gratifying to them and a source of satisfaction to me; and it enabled me to stress her essential importance. I could refer to the facts that she had climbed Helvellyn and was able to paint jolly good pictures. She had also been to Switzerland and could talk in French and German, which was more, I felt, than could be said of many aunts. Being an adventurer herself too, she had no nonsensical ideas about the incapacities of other people; and it was upon her invitation that I was once bidden to take my brother to spend a fortnight with her in Wales. It was a complicated journey with four changes, my brother being ten at the time and myself eleven; but there was never a hint from her, when we ultimately arrived, that it had been anything but an everyday occurrence.

## Aunt Felicia

All through my schooldays and the two years that I afterwards spent in Canada, Aunt Felicia continued to be a governess. Save for a brief term, after which she declined to stay any longer, in the house of a very distinguished but pugnacious baronet, she was apparently happy; and with many of her pupils she maintained a life-long correspondence. But she was now in the middle fifties. She was becoming a little deaf. She had accumulated enough money to buy herself a small annuity. And she suddenly decided to pay a visit to South Africa, where my Aunt Ruth was then living as a nurse. She travelled out steerage, meeting, as she afterwards told us, several most interesting fellow-voyagers; and for nearly a year she wandered about the Karroo, staying with her sister and her sister's farmer friends. She also sold some pictures there, enough at any rate to pay part of her fare back; and when she returned to England her deafness had so increased that her governess days were clearly over. She therefore went back to Croydon, where she had one or two friends, found another bed-sitting-room in a back street, purchased an ear trumpet, and began to live on a pound a week and whatever she could earn with her paint-brush.

This was not very much, though she sold an occasional picture and managed to obtain two or three pupils. But at least she had an income now which was sufficient for her needs and even enabled her to save a little and contribute to charity. By a fortunate chance, too, since she disliked cooking, there was an eating-house for workmen on the opposite side of the street; and every day, at one o'clock, she crossed

the road with a plate, which was filled with meat and vegetables for sixpence. When I lunched with her, as I sometimes did, we would do this together, since Aunt Felicia liked to take the air, the very respectable people (as she called them) who kept the eating-house providing us with covers for the return journey.

I was then studying medicine, a subject in which Aunt Felicia had no personal interest, although she regarded its practice as a career that was undoubtedly useful. In her younger days, of course, doctors were not the sort of people that were usually called upon. But times had changed; and she was a great admirer of Luke Fildes' celebrated picture. Realist as she was, indeed, there was a considerable strain in her, as her painting showed, of sentimentalism; and once she had made up her mind or her heart to worship anybody, she did so thoroughly and without reservations. Evidence, however undeniable, derogatory to her hero would be loftily brushed aside or flatly ignored; and for a considerable time, during this second Croydon sojourn, she employed herself upon a novel about the Duke of Wellington. It was written, entirely without paragraphs, in her usual firm and deliberate hand; and although it was never published or, as far as I know, even submitted to a publisher, few more god-like figures can ever have been enshrined in a work of fiction.

Such was her life for the next six or seven years, with a few weeks' holiday every summer, when she would perhaps share lodgings with one of her sisters, preferably in a place where there were mountains, or pay a visit to

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one of the country houses of some ancestral survivor. But at the age of sixty-two, having been persuaded to join a tour round the coast of Norway, she returned so entranced that she resolved to make Norway her home. For one thing, it was a country, she had found, where she could live very cheaply, although she now had sixty pounds a year; and for another it appeared to be relatively immune from thunder and lightning, the only two things of which she was really afraid. It was also beautiful with the grave, early morning beauty that appealed to her most strongly; and the Norwegians that she had encountered, especially in the remoter north, had been people after her own heart.

In the following year, therefore, with a couple of boxes, her ear trumpet and her tricycle, she said good-bye to Croydon, and for the next eight years I never knew exactly where she was. Letters would occasionally arrive from her, sometimes from Christiania — where she had sold a picture, she once wrote, to the queen — but more frequently from places that could only have been found upon a large-scale ordnance map. But she hurried back for my mother's last illness and again, two or three years after I was married, in connection with a legacy from an aunt of her own, which enabled her to buy another annuity.

That must have been the occasion, I think, upon which she came to stay with us, dragging her luggage along the pavement; and although she casually mentioned that she was becoming a trifle rheumatic, she appeared to be as vigorous as ever. Apart from this, indeed, and her deafness, I doubt if she

had ever been conscious of a physical function or known what it was, except occasionally at sea, to feel other than ready for a meal. Even her deafness and rheumatism she seemed to regard quite objectively as curious tenants that had apparently to stay with her; and she would listen with amusement, she told us, to the noises going on in her head that were sometimes like trains and sometimes like fifes and drums.

'They tell me it's due to the blood,' she explained, 'going round and round,' and she was once discovered chuckling in our bathroom. She had been peering in astonishment at our modest array of household bottles and jars of ointment. One of them was in her hand.

'What on earth,' she inquired, 'is cascara sagrada?'

But her stay was brief. England was too relaxing; and some months afterwards we received a letter from her, from which it appeared that she was spending the summer in the Lofoten Islands. Later she wrote from a small town somewhere near the mouth of the Nord Fjord; and though her letters were rare and assumed a degree of local knowledge that we did not usually possess, we were able to glean from them that she was fully maintaining her particular interests in life. Though she was relatively unmoved by contemporary politics, she was evidently keeping in touch with English literature in so far as this avoided any discussion of religion or the relations between the sexes; and having mastered Norwegian she would occasionally recommend us to read the works of various Scandinavian authors. For the most part, however, her letters were concerned with the new church

## Aunt Felicia

built by Pastor This, the concert organized by Fru That, and the scholastic achievements of their respective children. There was also a period, I remember, when she seemed to be toying with the idea of buying a derelict cottage which could be purchased for thirty shillings, and it was only her rheumatism, I believe, that prevented her from paying a visit to Spitzbergen.

But with the coming of the Great War I learned from my Aunt Rose that she had returned to the British Isles; and it was in January 1915 that I received a long letter from her written from a town in the north of Scotland. It was the first time that I had heard from her for about a year, and although her rheumatism, she said, had become worse, she had found comfortable lodgings and was knitting garments for those engaged upon the task of mine-sweeping. As for the War itself, she was apparently taking it for granted as one of the many that she now remembered, which included those of her childhood in India and the Crimea, wars in Egypt and Afghanistan, the war of the 'seventies between France and Germany, in which her sympathies had been entirely Teutonic, the war in South Africa, which she had followed with some interest, owing to her previous visit to my Aunt Ruth, the war between Russia and Japan, which had been too far off for any intimate concern, the war between Spain and America, and various smaller ones that had appeared, from time to time, in the *Morning Post*.

But wars were not activities in which, as a woman, it had been her duty to play any part, though she would doubtless have done so had she been a professional soldier like her

maternal uncles and great-uncles. They were recurring occasions for the display of male heroism, tempered with mercy for the vanquished; and when England happened to be participating, there was generally somebody like the Duke of Wellington or Lord Roberts to see that she won. It would be the same now, of course, in the end, which would not, she hoped, be unduly delayed; and it was distressing to read of so many brave young men giving up their lives for their country. But all that was implied in being a young man at all. Had she been one herself, she would have assumed it without question; and meanwhile – though of course she did not write all this – she had laid aside her painting to knit mufflers for them. It was the job in front of her in her Scotch lodgings; and 'we too,' she concluded, 'have not been without our tragedies, as a young lady walked off the end of the pier here on Septuagesima Sunday.'

When the War was over and I saw Aunt Felicia again, she was seventy-six; and although she had been tempted to do so, she had come to the conclusion that she was now too deaf and rather too lame to go back to Norway. Aunt Caroline having died, therefore, a few years before in the general ward of a south-country hospital, and Aunt Ruth being still in South Africa, she decided to go and live near Aunt Rose. She too, after forty years of governing, had saved up enough money to retire, and was now living in a bed-sitting-room at St. Leonards-on-Sea. If they had lived together, now that Aunt Felicia had a hundred and



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twenty pounds a year, they might even have been able to take three rooms and enjoy the services of a maid. But Aunt Rose, though she was rather like a dormouse, had developed her own personality; and with possible memories of what Aunt Felicia had once been, she refused to be stirred from her chosen nest. So the two old ladies dwelt a few doors apart; and although they attended different churches – Aunt Felicia preferring a ritual slightly more elaborate than Aunt Rose considered necessary – they met every day for a walk on the front, and occasionally took tea with each other in their respective rooms.

Sometimes I would visit them for a few hours, finding Aunt Felicia a little bent, but with her eyes as bright in her clear, wrinkled face as when she had been the Aunt Felicia of my school-days. She would show me the calendars that she was busy painting for some imminent church bazaar or in aid of a society for educating Armenian children in which she had lately become deeply interested. She would also insist, though her legs were now very painful, in limping her determined mile along the sea-front; and she would generally have something to tell me about her last or approaching summer holiday. These were now spent in the neighbourhood of Dartmoor, for which she had conceived one of her romantic attachments; and history so far repeated itself that, on one occasion, she invited two of my daughters to stay with her there.

She could no longer tire them out with walking as once she had tired my brother and myself; and since she was stone-deaf now and the children dis-

liked shouting, she was content to imagine with a smile what they were saying to each other. But she let them go their own ways – they were fourteen and eleven – and if these involved long motor-drives with the local butcher-boy, she accepted the position without comment, and retired to bed presuming that they would eventually come in. It was a little strange perhaps. But each generation had its own ways – an ordinance of Providence for which there was much to be said; and had butcher-boys with motor cars been available seventy years ago, she would doubtless have acted as they were doing. In fact, as great-aunts went, I was given to understand that she had behaved not too badly.

But the rheumatism increased. My Aunt Ruth, who had returned from South Africa, found St. Leonard's too cold; and Aunt Felicia and her youngest sister ultimately moved to a suburb of Bournemouth. She was eighty-six then and very crippled, though she still rose and dressed herself unaided; and I found her in an armchair, on my first visit, in the little parlour that they could now afford. Her spectacles had slipped to the volume in her lap – a collection of poems by Maurice Baring – and after the usual family inquiries, she began to discuss them as though all time lay before us both. I wish now that I had gone to see her oftener. But the months slid by and became years; and when I received a telegram one day from Aunt Ruth it was to say that Aunt Felicia seemed to be rather seriously ill.

She had grown very small, as old people do, and I am not quite sure if

## Aunt Felicia

she knew who I was, her main concern being to get up and dress, since she had become so tired, she said, of lying in bed. I have various friends who believe very strongly in the theory of old and young souls; and if they are right, the soul that inhabited Aunt Felicia, and perhaps was her, must surely have been a young one. I had hoped to see her again. But the next time I went down I was a few hours too late. The lids had dropped, I found, for the last time over her April eyes.

# Lambstails for Luncheon

by Anne Fremantle

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‘U<sup>NGLE</sup> REU-BEN! Uncle Reu-ben! Where have you got to?’ The child’s voice stumbled clumsily into hearing, getting nearer and nearer, finding him out. Reuben swore aloud. He had almost forgotten, painting alone in the fields, that he was a human being burdened with the gift of speech, and it seemed the lambs scampering ecstatically, the yellow woodpeckers and the pigeons in the wood beyond, whose bleating and calling seemed not to break the silence but only to emphasize and accentuate it, were likewise forgetful of his humanity, and accepted him as part of the furniture of their world. But the panting boy, who, on arrival, flung himself breathlessly down on the grass, was an alien, an invader. The sheep scattered at his coming, and their lambs, after an inquisitive stare or two, followed.

‘It’s dinner time, and Mum says you’re to come quick, or Mrs. Grey’s lovely steak and kidney pudding will be all spoilt.’

Reuben cursed himself for not having taken sandwiches, but repressed the ‘for God’s sake run away and leave me in peace, can’t you see I’m busy’ – that came to his lips. Instead, putting down palette and brushes, he said meekly, ‘all right, sonny. I’ll be along

in a couple of shakes of a lamb’s tail. You go back and tell ’em to begin. For after all it was only by Miriam’s kindness that he was here at all, in all the intoxication of this Shropshire April. But Philip was not to be put off so easily.

‘No, no, you just come along with me,’ he said sternly. “‘Mind you bring him back yourself,” Mum said, and Mrs. Grey, she said, “and don’t lose him on the way nor yourself either”.’

Reuben sighed and gave in. ‘Very well, I’ll come. But first I must wipe my brushes or they’ll be caked and dry and useless by the time I get back. I don’t think it’s going to rain, do you?’ And he frowned up at the cloudless blue sky.

‘Rain? – I should think not,’ said Philip. ‘Look here, I’ll wipe the worst off with this long grass, and you can finish them with your paint rag.’ He seized the brushes and began energetically.

Reuben walked back to his work after lunch, his hands in his pockets, whistling aloud. He wanted to turn somersaults, to run, to walk absurd fancy ways, anything to let out some of the joy that was inside him, that welled up and up and screamed to be let out. Never had he imagined such beauty: the row of Lombardy poplars at the bottom of the farm paddock, light with

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a radiance that seemed colourless, formless, bodiless, javelined the sky. The faint green of the hedges had for him an association of music, as though the growing hawthorn bushes were a crescendo of sound that had burst into tiny leaf. That such things existed, that his mind could contain them! And he felt himself part of it; that was the most marvellous miracle of them all. He knew himself for what his mirror showed him he was, a fat, beetle-like, entirely unappetizing little Jew, with cheap spectacles on his nose and spots on his chin, and hair growing out of his ears. But it didn't matter, he was in no wise discordant: the country, the spring, Nature herself accepted him. He was round-shouldered from having spent three years, aged fourteen to seventeen, varnishing the insides of hanging cupboards for a cheap furniture manufacturer. He was short-sighted from drawing by artificial light five evenings a week, and from poring over books of drawings in museums all his spare time. He was short-winded from lack of exercise and a continual diet of fish and bread and chips (mainly chips). But only one thing mattered, this glory of sun and green fields, of blue sky and things growing. He had never seen grass or trees behave as these did in the sunlight, they absorbed it so completely as to become invested with its radiance, whilst yet retaining their own colours and forms. He painted the grass green and it looked absurd, for the grass was golden, shining, alive: he painted it golden and it lost all look of grass. In despair he would fling down his brushes and stare and stare and stare. He had not seen the country

in spring before; had gone, as a child, with his parents for a fortnight in August every other year to the sea, but he had never before been there to see the daffodils that grew wild in the damp places, or the red nut catkins standing out of the purplish haze that veiled the coppice. Yet it couldn't be – surely he must always have had some share in this resurrection – surely without him there could be no sudden starring of yellow primroses along the bank, no wild quivering of wind flowers, and dog's mercury under the bare birch and chestnut saplings? It had never happened before: this was the world's first spring.

He had reached his casel, slipped on his overall, and taken up his palette. But before he began he must half-turn and look at the hills, which were a continual wonder and terror to him. He had seen mountains on the cinema: Everest and Kanchenjunga, the Andes, the Alps; but those fast fleeing, cloud-encompassed snow-capped giants, that came and startled and passed again, were far removed from the immense stateliness, the calm, distant, contented immobility of Wenlock Edge, ruddy with dead bracken, and of the hills that, motionless, yet rolled along towards Wales. Not the most majestic works of man: not Buckingham Palace nor St. Paul's, the Chelsea power station, nor the B.B.C. building, had such static dignity, such awful eternity, such unshakable, inviolable, there-ness; these were 'from everlasting to everlasting,' fixed and rigid, yet alive.

And the colour. He let his eyes slowly move from the hills over the infinite variety of fields and woods, of stray roofs and occasional streams, back

## Anne Fremantle

to his painting. And remembered how, as a child, he had loved to be taken, hanging on to an elder's hand, into the local drapers to buy a reel of silk. The shop girl would pull out tray after tray of silks of all colours. reds that were his earliest loves, and pinks, then blues whose litany of names he was only to learn later, then the whole gamut of greens from veridian to aquamarine, then yellows, then browns. As he grew older and went to play in the parks, he had discovered crocuses and tulips, pansies and wallflowers, the continual sequence of whose colour filled the beds. He had found florists' shops and drapers, and fruit barrows. Later still, he gradually came to see colours everywhere – in the black draperies of nuns or the sudden scarlet of a costermonger's handkerchief, no less than in the road-menders' brazier or the huge red gasometers glowing fiercely in the sun. And wherever he had seen, he had worshipped. He had slaved at his nightly drawings until he won a scholarship to the R.C.A., had worked there continually, without money for fares, so he must walk tired miles of pavement for food, so often he was dizzy, and always cold; for friendships, so he could never share the college gaieties. But for paints and canvas, for etching materials and drawing paper, he saved enough. Now college was over, and he had sold five pictures and painted one portrait in the past year. Then Miriam, his eldest sister, who had married well, wrote suddenly: 'This Easter I'm going down to a farm in Shropshire with the kids, Philip and Joan have had whooping cough and their Dad thinks they need a change. If you can raise the fare,

come for a week on me.' So he came, and already three days were gone. But he couldn't face the idea of going back to his 8s. a week bed-sitter. His mind rejected the very memory of it. The stone farmhouse and kind Mrs. Grey who overfed them all and spoilt his little rats of nephews and nieces, and her farmyard full of jolly shapes and noises and smells, of pigs and geese and pails and troughs and men in corduroys, – these were real. The other was a nightmare from which now he was at last happily awakened. But he must stop thinking, stop remembering: it interfered with his work. Man might be a rational animal, but an artist was a painting one, whose reason was but an unimportant, secondary part of his make-up.

The lambs frisked and played, gambolling with infinite grace, as he longed to gambol, expressing so completely, so finally all he felt, that in painting them he was entirely satisfied. They were at once an epitome of that day of all spring days, and of all possible animal or human reactions to that day. They were the very essence of the grass and the sunlight itself, and of what sunlight and grass were to him. In painting them he both worshipped and by some strange transmutation became identified with what he worshipped.

Their shadows grew longer; became gigantic, ghostly lambs beside their bodies, as the sunlight fled across the fields and climbed up the saplings as a cat with a pack of dogs after it: then vanished. Reuben reluctantly collected his paraphernalia together and walked home, a tortoise-like figure, cluttered with easel, paint box and

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canvas, proceeding absurdly through the April-coloured twilight.

He woke at six next morning and let himself out, walking through the opal mists up on to the hills. Below him the farm buildings and tallest poplars were alike hidden under a shining white cloud, whilst he was in the warm new sunlight. Then he ran down to an uproarious breakfast with Miriam, her husband, her three children and Mr. and Mrs. Grey, a breakfast of ham and eggs, stewed tea and home-made soda-bread and butter. Man cannot live by ecstasy alone, thought a full, contented Reuben as he walked to his field. But when he got there – O! unbelievable horror, there were no lambs. All had vanished and the air was rent with the lamentations of their dams. He began, disconsolate, to unpack his painting things, but what should he do, lambless? He wavered and hesitated. First he thought he would stay and paint the background, the ewes, the coppice; then, no, he decided to go elsewhere and paint perhaps the little stone bridge across the Bron. He packed up again and began to walk away, when he heard a noise that made him look up, a frenzied exaggeration of bleating at the far end of the field. A farm labourer was opening a gate, and through it, another, complete with crook, was driving back the lambs. They trotted into the field, and as their dams rushed to meet them, there was such a clamour of reunion that the tears came to Reuben's eyes for very joy and pity. His lambs were returned safe home. But – he looked again: what monster had so mutilated them? Their tails were gone. Where yesterday they had lovely ridiculous

waving things, to-day were only grotesque stumps. And the fussy ewes tried to comfort them, to heal the sore places with their tongues, but still the stumps gaped in the sunlight, and the flies began to collect round them and to settle on the poor open wounds. For one mad instant Reuben thought of rushing upon the labourers, throttling them, somehow hurting, avenging with his hands the innocent beasts. Then remembered how hopelessly inadequate such action must be – laughable in itself and powerless to restore what had been destroyed for ever. How hateful men were! Faced with the transcendent beauty of spring, of the Easter-glorious country, with the joy of the lambs that was the very incarnation of resurgent earth, their first thought, their only action was to waste, to destroy, to vilify, to hurt. There could be no redemption for such creatures; the saving power of the spring could not touch them, the blessed healing offered by nature only magnified their refusal of her gifts. The sunlight and blue sky mocked Reuben's misery: the spring regarded him as the accomplice of these torturers; he could never face the lambs again, nor paint them. His picture and his pleasure were ruined, spoilt. He gave one long last look at the agonizing scene, then fled. He spent the rest of the morning in the coppice, sitting on a wood pile. His faith, his pride, his whole vision of the universe had suffered a horrible shock, and, powerless to react against it, he sat and gloomed. At last, after hours of misery, or so it seemed to him, he started to go back to the farm. As he passed on his way he could not refrain from a horrified, fascinated glance at

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the field of blood; the lambs were grazing now or asleep in the grass; though none were gambolling or gay, none seemed actively in pain. He reached home, shying like a startled horse at every man he saw and scrambling up into his own room as though fearing pursuit. A pleasant smell of cooking dinner penetrated, a warm gravyish smell that comforted Reuben not a little. It made him feel as though not everything were tragic or grim, or lost; the homely appetites which man shares with the kindly beasts at least reduced him to a common carnality and therein lay hope.

The dinner bell sounded, and Reuben combed his hair, straightened his tie and went down. They were all assembled – a bunch of cowslips, the first he had seen, was on the table

‘Look what Alice found’ – Joan ran up to him and pointed to the flowers.

Mrs. Grey brought in a huge dish, savoury, steaming, rich brown, piled high with meat, ‘Ere’s a h’unexpected treat for you all,’ she said, ‘nice juicy lambs’ tails! Now what do you say to that?’

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# At Home and Abroad

## I

### An Open Letter to any Member of the Travel Association

by Clive Bell

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SIR,

The fact that my interests are to some extent involved in your aims emboldens me, a stranger, to address you. For your aims, if I understand them aright, are to induce foreign tourists to come to England and to induce English holiday-makers to stay at home. Towards these, if you can spare me ten minutes of your time, I may be able to direct you; at least I can tell you why two of my foreign friends will not again come to Britain, and why Mr. Hubert Prince, of the shirt and collar department, and I always spend our holidays (which means our spare cash) abroad. That is the sort of information you want, isn't it?

I had better introduce my witnesses. Of me, I dare say, you know already as much as you care to know. Of my friend, Mrs. Norman Castle, all you need to know is that she is an American lady of means, spirit and other attractions. Monsieur Albert Durand once wrote a play, but do not

let that discourage you, he is now on the staff of an important daily paper a little to the right of left-centre. While Mr. Prince, besides being chief of the shirt and collar department in one of our largest and most respectable stores, is a sound conservative and a pillar of the Church, as I know for certain, because he once confided to me across the counter that in his opinion the vicar a little underestimated the importance of his services.

Well, Mr. Prince, at the age of fifty-five, for the first time in his life took his holiday abroad. Instead of going to Brighton he went to Dieppe, and he came back delighted with the experiment; so delighted that the next summer he persuaded – so he assures me – no less than four of his colleagues to share with him the almost bewildering liberties and amenities of a French 'holiday-resort'. The pound has fallen, a National Government has been formed, but Mr. Prince continues to take his holiday at Dieppe, and I cannot blame him.



## Clive Bell

Brighton or Dieppe? That is the question. That is the question, dear sir, for Mr. Prince and thousands like him – thousands, I mean, with a year's savings to spend on a fortnight's pleasure, thousands who are just beginning to realize what the whiting would have persuaded the snail to realize, that 'there is another shore you know upon the other side,' thousands on whom it is beginning to dawn that they are not obliged to accept, and pay for, what Brighton, Eastbourne and Margate have to offer.

The last time I spent a night at Brighton I dined well enough in the most expensive restaurant in the place. But that dinner for two, with a bottle of wine and a glass of brandy, cost well over three pounds – a price far beyond Mr. Prince's means and considerably beyond mine. Afterwards we danced – you are not to suppose that I was at Brighton with Mr. Prince – or rather began to dance; for hardly had we warmed to our amusement when, at eleven o'clock to be precise, the band stopped and the lights were put out. A waiter, with the air of imparting a dead and slightly dirty secret, confided to me that there was positively a hall in Brighton where one could make merry till midnight. And so one could; that is, if one had the stomach to be merry on cold coffee and tepid lemonade.

The last time I went to Dieppe was on a Saturday in August. My companion was violently sick all the way across; and that certainly is an argument for staying in England if you happen to be there. However, she had almost recovered by the time we came ashore, and to complete the cure went straight to the Café du

Tribunal where, sitting in the sun, watching the amusing market crowd, we drank our well-iced Pernods – at four o'clock in the afternoon too – and forgot all about the crossing. On the port we got as good a dinner as the most expensive restaurant in Brighton had been able to provide; only it cost one hundred francs instead of four hundred (the pound was at 124). Then, for a little mild gambling, to the Casino, where we could have danced for as long as we pleased; but my companion having asked me whether there was not some smaller and more amusing place, I replied that there were two I knew of where the band and floor were excellent and where one could get a good bottle of white wine. Already you are beginning to imagine that these were low haunts full of fleas and desperate characters, so let me make your mind easy at once by saying that the first people we saw as we entered were from the yacht of a respectable and highly patriotic peer. To be sure, amongst the dancers were some of the crew, but that didn't seem to make the entertainment less agreeable, so democratic and demoralizing is the atmosphere of pleasure. We danced and drank till four in the morning.

Next day being Sunday, of course we went to the races. You realize, don't you, that provincial racing in France is not the expensive, noisy, thievish affair which we avoid in England? A small crowd of sportsmen, visitors, and townspeople, with their wives and children, assemble to amuse themselves: the charges are modest, the bets more modest still, the whole thing reminds one of a cricket match during a southern week rather

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than of an English race meeting. And so back to the sea for a bathe and an apéritif with the gay throng sitting about at little tables in their beach-pyjamas and bathing-suits. The weather happened to be lovely; but I must say that if it is bathing and sitting about drinking cocktails with very little on that you like, you will do better to go to the Mediterranean.

Now I can guess what you are going to say. You are going to say that you don't like that sort of thing at all, that you don't like life at Dieppe nor at Bandol either. Wait a bit. Let me finish my account of a continental Sunday and then I will come back to your objections. Well, then, after dinner we went to a hilarious farce from the Palais Royal, which seemed funny enough after a good dinner, and certainly was funny enough to have been heavily censored in this land of the free. (May I say, in passing, that English holiday-makers appear to enjoy the sort of plays and books and papers they are not encouraged to see or read in England, since the first thing they do on reaching 'the other side' is to lay in a stock of illustrated papers – *Le Rire*, *Le Sourire*, *La Vie Parisienne* – while copies of banned English books are to be found on every stall?) Anyhow, we enjoyed our farce, which gave us a new thirst and an appetite for more dancing.

So, this sort of life, this drinking at all hours of the day and night, gambling, and sitting up late, is not at all the sort of life you want? Of course it is not; nor the sort of life I want either – every day in the year. When we are at home and at work we don't want to be having drinks all day, and we are quite ready for bed soon after mid-

night. A glass or two of wine with the excellently cooked dinner that we get in our own houses, a book, and a night-cap is all we need – and quite enough too. (It is only when, once in a way, we sup in a restaurant that we get a taste of those English ignominies of which foreigners complain.) But when we are on a holiday we want something different, something that the ghost of puritanism is still formidable enough to frighten out of England: we want to have 'a good time'. (Remember it is for holidays you are inviting foreigners to come, and urging us to stay.) Well, you may take it from me, most people's idea of a holiday is having what most people call 'a good time'; and for most the *sine qua non* of 'a good time' is having a drink when and where one wants it. Ingredients also are, looking forward to meals, looking at 'pretties', and sitting up late – which means more drinks, for no one can enjoy sitting up late on barley-water. You think I am speaking for the frivolous tourist only? Maybe most tourists are frivolous. But, in fact, I have wandered over Europe with grave historians and eminent museum officials and I can assure you that the first thing we do on arriving in a '*ville d'art*' is to discover a well-placed café, take a seat, and call for a drink – a real drink. Believe me, if you want to bring foreign tourists to England, and to keep us here, the first thing your society must do is to agitate for the repeal of our ridiculous licensing laws.

'Looking forward to meals,' I said. Now listen. Mrs. Norman Castle lives in Touraine, and she spends the months of August and September touring the Continent in her car. She has a passion

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for sight-seeing, but she will not see the sights of England again. Perhaps she is a little greedy. She says the food in English hotels is generally uneatable, and I agree. She adds that the beds are uncomfortable. This I had not noticed; but Lady Margaret Duckworth, who also takes an interest in your movement, tells me that she often meets Americans who make the same complaint. As for the food, I shall add on my own account that it is preposterously expensive, a fact which Mrs. Castle is perhaps too rich to have noticed. Food in the provincial hotels of England has deteriorated during the last twenty years. I call to mind a noble eighteenth-century inn in one of the most enchanting towns of England. I lunched there in the summer of 1913 and found on the sideboard a fine cold joint of English beef as red as a soldier's coat, a cold saddle of mutton (English) and a well-cooked steak and kidney pie: these good things were followed by a vast fruit tart and generous jugs of thick rich cream: a ripe Stilton for those who would still be eating: no coffee, and better so – the English being at their very worst in coffee. Last summer I lunched there again; the ordinary was gone, the long table was gone, the mahogany was gone, the sideboard was gone, but there was a lounge and what was called a table d'hôte luncheon served at separate bamboo tables: *menu*, tomato soup from the bottle, a bit of stale fish eked out with pink paste, a grisly and tepid shoulder of Australian mutton with half-boiled potatoes and watery cabbage, apricots from the tin with Bird's custard, cubes of pale yellow cheese, coffee which even with milk was undrinkable. Couldn't

your society do something about the hotels?

If food in our provincial hotels is vile, so is service. Mrs. Castle, being an American lady, holds, with Socrates, that time was made for slaves. As often as not she gets up at twelve, drinks a cup of tea, and starts off on her wanderings at one. Consequently, about three she feels inclined for lunch. Would you believe it, as often as not in the best hotel of a large provincial town she is refused a meal, and is reduced to appeasing appetite with a bun and a bottle of ginger-pop at the pastrycook's? Why, only last year, at precisely 2 35 p m., in one of the most tourist-haunted of our Sussex towns, the same thing happened to me. On the other hand, as recently as last April I was motoring near Naples with another American lady who, having eaten nothing all day, bethought her at four o'clock in the afternoon that she would like some lunch. The first possible eating place to which we came was a mere *guinguette*, a shanty overlooking the sea, whither of a summer's evening came the Neapolitans to drink and dance and enjoy the beauties of nature. I warned her that in such a place at such an hour one could hardly expect more than bread and goat's milk butter and a bottle of wine. But she, being a person used to having her own way, brushed aside this objection, and, walking in, called for the waiter, who took her order as though it were the most natural thing in the world for a young lady at four o'clock in the afternoon to want a pasta and a beef-steak and fried potatoes. And, after all, why not? The pasta was said to be excellent, the beef looked unendurably tough, I

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can answer for it that the wine was good. When I tell this story to my compatriots they assert indignantly that no English cook could be expected to produce beef steak and fried potatoes at four o'clock in the afternoon; and they add (truly, alas!) that it is against the law of England to produce a bottle of wine at such an hour. Could you bring it home, do you think, to the public that at any rate there is no law of nature which ordains that Englishmen and women shall do less work for more money than anyone else?

Please sir, don't think I am saying that England is a bad country to live in. it is a good country to live in, but a bad one to make holiday in. At this present writing I am in the depths of a delightful country, working most of the morning, reading in the garden, drinking a glass of wine with my dinner, and going to bed betimes. I am extremely happy; but I am not having what is called 'a good time'. And when the holiday mood possesses me, I shall not motor to Brighton, only a dozen miles away, but take the boat for Dieppe and beyond: I shall not make a tour of Kent and Sussex, full though both are of charming 'sights', I shall prefer a country where one can combine sight-seeing with holiday-making.

If you really want us to spend our holidays in England you must bring the influence of your society to bear on the Government and on the hotel-keepers, too. You must allow us the amenities and amusements allowed in every civilized country on the Continent. You must deliver us from such humiliations as that of having our glasses snatched away from us at midnight – at one, as a special treat, if we have ordered a

plate of sandwiches as well. I know foreigners who have been irritated so wildly by this affront, perpetrated in restaurants where they had already paid exorbitant prices for what they were not allowed to consume, that they have vowed there and then never to set foot in England again, and have kept their vow. On Sunday nights I have seen the outrage perpetrated on unsuspecting Americans at eleven; and I have blushed for my country. And, frankly, are you not yourself humiliated when you read in *The Times* of those cases of spying and trickery at Night Clubs by *agents provocateurs* and evening-clothes men?

Now I'll tell you something about M. Albert Durand. He came to London by the twelve o'clock train from Paris, but he won't come again. On the very same day I left London by the eleven for Paris. M. Durand enjoyed an excellent lunch on the train; and so did I, because, like all experienced travellers, I waited till 2.45 and lunched on the French side: one or two greenhorns are generally cajoled into 'lunching on the English, and anything less appetizing than the meal served to them it would be impossible to imagine. Arrived at Calais, I walked straight to my seat, my luggage was stacked neatly at the end of the car, and in due course a civil officer came to my table and asked me whether I had anything to declare: had he wished to make sure that I was speaking the truth when I said 'no' he would have had my suit-case brought to my table and examined there. But poor M. Durand was herded into a filthy shed, where, in pandemonium, his cases were opened and his belongings roughly,

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rudely and dirtily tossed about. A good foretaste that of the delights of an English holiday. So far as I know there is not one single great international express on the continent – of course there may be exceptions of which I am unaware – in which passengers' luggage is not examined in the train. Why must England make an exception to this admirable rule? It would be quite easy to examine luggage on our trains, and still easier on the boat.

A month or two ago I travelled on the four o'clock from Paris, and, between Folkestone and Victoria fell into conversation with an indignant American lady, married to an Austrian. She was on her way to visit her family in the States: she had tickets – date of sailing indicated – from Vienna to New York *via* Liverpool, and she proposed to sleep one night at Claridge's. Would you believe it, in that foul shanty at Folkestone, every piece of her hand luggage – and there was plenty of it – was opened and examined with a minimum of consideration and civility? Oh, to be in England! And, as we were travelling by the four o'clock, she was obliged to eat a meal on the English train which did nothing, I can assure you, to make her think better of our country. The only help I could offer was to advise her in future to take the French boat at Cherbourg direct to New York.

I was the more humiliated by my countrymen's officious stupidity because only a week earlier, coming on the Simplon express – and remember the Simplon takes second-class passengers – from Venice to Paris I had met with very different manners. Immediately after dinner the car attendant

presented me with a document in which I was invited to declare whether or no I had any dutiable articles in my luggage. I had none. I signed the paper, went to bed, slept my way across the Swiss and French frontiers and heard no more of the matter – no, not even at the gare de Lyon: and this, although I was going to stay a week in Paris. Now, surely, if in this matter of customs the French Government can take my word, my own Government can treat me with common humanity. When I put this to one of our high officials he asserted that these drastic inquisitions were necessitated by the duty of catching drug-traffickers. Really, Mr. Dogberry, really! I have known too many of your breed to expect much sense or veracity from Government officials; but to ask me to swallow stuff of that sort is downright insolence. Not even a British Jack in office is naïf enough to suppose that drug-traffickers go through customs' houses with packets of cocaine lying about in their bags.

Meanwhile, M. Durand has reached his hotel, and what the devil is he to do next? He has no English friends: how and where is he to get a sense of London? In the public-houses? For there are no cafés, as he understands the word – no open-air cafés on the street at all events. Apparently there is something so shocking about enjoying a drink that the discreditable business must be got through furtively. Believe me, our worst enemy is this semi-demi-prohibition. For the lack of out-door cafés has nothing to do with climate. Don't you believe it. The climate of London is no worse than the climate of Paris;

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don't tell the Parisiens so. The fact is there is no public life in England because the spectacle of people enjoying themselves is offensive to the puritan rump. And that is why the only foreigners who love London are, you will find, foreigners who speak English and have English friends. No one who knows it denies that the private life, which is lived behind those rather forbidding blinds of ours, is delightful charming and brilliant people, gay conversation, wit, fun, romps, and admirable food and drink. Yes, but that is of no use to the tourist; and when the diplomatist, *en poste* at London, speaks of the charm of English life, the tourist simply doesn't believe him. Also of what use to Mr. Prince and me are these delightful interiors when, mere tourists, we want to wander about England, sight-seeing, or to make holiday by the sea?

The only holiday-maker who seems at all likely to find what he wants in this country is the holiday-maker in search of sport; and even he apparently prefers playing golf or lawn tennis at

Cannes or Le Touquet – Le Touquet, the most horrible place I ever was in, bar Peacehaven. But even at Le Touquet, that essential amenity of French civilization, the right to enjoy oneself in one's own way is respected. And so the holiday-maker for whom golf or tennis comes first, feeling that without the right to drink when and where he likes, to gamble a bit, to dance all night if so minded, and to enjoy cheap wine and good food well served, a holiday is hardly to be called a holiday, as likely as not goes abroad.

And there you have it. You will never induce Mrs. Castle and M. Durand to come back, or Mr. Prince and me to stay, till you have made England a place where the tourist can have a good time; and you will not do that till you have repealed the licensing laws and reformed the hotels. How precisely you are to set about it I do not know. Perhaps I could give you a hint or two; but I have to catch the boat, and so good-bye and good luck to you.

CLIVE BELL.

## II

### Why Foreign Visitors shun England by Frank Swinnerton

I see that somebody – in this case it is Dr. Alfred Cox, general secretary of the British Health Resorts Association, – has again been saying that

grandmotherly restrictions upon the sale of liquor keep foreigners away from Great Britain. This is absurd. Although it is perfectly true that liquor

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restrictions are a nuisance and ought to be abolished, liquor restrictions are not the cause of England's lack of charm for foreigners. If lashings of liquor were at all times available, foreigners would still give us a wide berth.

Yet we have a beautiful country, the sight of which, even in winter, takes away the breath of Americans on their way to the much less attractive Continent. Our trains, to foreign ideas small, are impressively swift and noiseless. We have many old and picturesque towns; the whole country is saturated with romantic associations; our people, although not bursting with bonhomie at sight of a visitor, even a distinguished visitor, are delightful and have the best street manners in the world. And still Americans go to the Continent, and continental citizens stay there. Why?

Because of the grandmotherly liquor restrictions, say the wiseacres. Nonsense. Foreigners are not confirmed sozzlers. The only parched travellers are Americans; and, although they pretend to be thirsty, Americans can so easily get paralytic at home by means of wood alcohol that European drinking is insipid to them.

But what does keep away the foreign visitor is the kind of food and lodging he is expected to stomach if he comes here. When one goes to America, one finds everywhere – even in towns in the far North-West which English people suppose to be outside civilization – magnificent hotels. Every room in these hotels has its own bath and toilet, with constant hot and cold water, telephone, and central heating. In many cases it is possible to get one's dirty linen washed and laundered

overnight. The rooms are clean, compact, and not expensive. Some of them are very comfortable. In the restaurants attached to the hotels food, while not first-class, is always in great variety, and the service is excellent.

Compare this with the sort of thing one finds in England, in the provinces. How many hotels in English provincial towns have a bath to each bedroom, central heating, and cleanliness equal to that of the American hotels? Precious few. You may find clean hotels, and much refinement, in seaside resorts of the better class; but the majority of English hotels outside London (and some of them in it) were built before the Flood and still mustily smell of Victorian food and furniture. You still have to march a mile to the bathroom (to find it occupied); your bedroom carpet still reveals hairpins of yesteryear, and the room itself a contemptuous assortment of sale-bought semi-antiques – table, chair, wardrobe with one coathanger, and so on. A list of rules and regulations (invented by the management) hangs upon the back of the door. Washing cannot be done overnight; unless you pay extra for coal or gas fire or – in very up-to-date hotels – electric fire, the room is as dank as a cellar. Take it or leave it; there's nothing better.

If an American visitor is ushered into such a room his heart sinks. He has arrived full of critical curiosity about the English; and he finds that the English do not welcome him. Having tried to keep himself warm, the American descends to a flyblown and very dingy dining-room, where crest-fallen waiters at last droop over his table. As a rule they are quite

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respectful, although sometimes they are accused of indifference; and they hold out a dirty menu card bearing purply the French names of roast beef, Irish stew, tinned vegetables, tinned fruit, rice, custard, and boiled potatoes.

They are not ashamed of this menu, as they ought to be. They merely look and feel dirty, ill-clothed, and wretched. The American is depressed, particularly when he sees the verdigris on the salt spoon and the dirt on the blade of his decayed steel knife.

He is even more depressed when he sees the good English food which has been disguised under French names in the menu. It is terrible stuff. It is pale, stewed, watery, and repulsive. It looks as if it had been prepared wholesale for a thousand paupers in some kitchen far from salt, pepper, butter, bicarbonate of soda, and any other aid to flavour or appearance. The American struggles with the meal. At last he calls madly for drink.

He does this, however, not because he is in favour of unrestricted liquor, but because he must after all have some nourishment. The next day, after sampling at breakfast something that tastes like a mixture of meat extract and cocoa, he leaves for the Continent. To his fellow-Americans, planning a trip to Europe, he says: 'Cut out England,' and describes his experience.

On the Continent he (and of course the continental visitor) finds very bright, lively hotels, the rooms warm, bathrooms attached to many of them, the furnishings sometimes rather gimcrack but quite often new and brisk, the service full of flattering politeness (at times a sinister politeness,

but impressive), the waiters expert, and the restaurant an important place where specially prepared food is served fresh from a kitchen in which cooking is taken seriously. The insular traveller may rage against kickshaws, or French butter, Italian oil and garlic, Hungarian pepper, or German sausage. But the worst meals I have tasted in Germany and France have been bad because the cook mistakenly tried to supply a thoroughly English meal.

Now English food is as good as any in the universe. The big London hotels are unsurpassed in luxury and quality. English private houses, in my experience, are superior to any others. But for those who visit England, who cannot stay in English homes, or at the few London luxury hotels, the outlook is gloomy. It is positively ghastly.

The majority of provincial hotels are fully fifty years behind the times. They are so because the well-to-do English have never stayed in them. The well-to-do English have always travelled on the Continent. Accordingly, continental hotels have been built and furnished and equipped to attract the well-to-do English. On the Continent the English have demanded the best cooking, the most comfortable rooms, warmth and privacy. And have obtained them.

The Americans are another great race of travellers. They travel about their own country. They are always going here and there through the United States. And so big hotels have sprung up everywhere, built to give satisfaction to the travellers. They are warm, clean, new, and efficient. They have to be.



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In England, on the other hand, since the stage coach went out of use, few people other than commercial travellers have used provincial hotels. The well-to-do have visited each other or have stayed in their own country houses. Other people have been forced to take what they could get. Now, when we should be glad to attract visitors, we find ourselves passed by.

Remove liquor restrictions, we say. Yes, certainly. But give a thought to something much more important. Make our provincial hotels compare with those of other countries. Let the

managers and staff realize that it is their business to please, even to delight every visitor. Let the food be temptingly prepared, and the rooms be clean, bright, warm, and properly equipped with bathroom and toilet. Otherwise those who are compelled to visit us will continue to warn their friends that our food is uneatable, and that our hotels are cold, dingy, and rudimentary. Until we have learnt that antiquity is one thing and antediluvianism another we shall be shunned by holiday-makers as a land of indigestion and discomfort. With reason.

# Reviews

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THE RUSSIAN JOURNALS OF MARTHA AND CATHERINE WILMOT. Macmillan. 21s.

MARTHA WILMOT was an Irish gentlewoman who in 1803 set out to visit Princess Daschkaw, an influential and eccentric Russian. The young traveller made so favourable an impression on her distinguished hostess that their relationship quickly grew into a passionate attachment, and the visit lasted for five years. Martha Wilmot kept a journal and wrote frequent letters, yet there was so much for her to describe that the first part of the book dazzles one to blindness. Princess Daschkaw had been an intimate friend of Catherine II, and was herself a woman of vast and varied gifts. This meant that Martha Wilmot was in the centre of the 'great world' as well as being the adored friend of a woman who was a maelstrom of activity. She was seeing for the first time a land of barbaric opulence as well as learning to know a people capable of behaviour ranging from the most delicately tender to the most startlingly tyrannical. Her pages are packed almost to confusion with courtiers who bend under jewels, the pearls to embroider dresses being weighed out by the pint; dinners of a hundred dishes; swarming servants in picturesque costumes who sing with a wild melancholy, and Fools who terrified by the liberties they took. The fortunes of her hosts were so great that tropical abundance was enjoyed despite the long bitter winters, their hot-houses producing grapes as large as hen's eggs and pineapples in profusion.

The delight of Princess Daschkaw in her young friend was so moving and so sincere that it seemed Martha Wilmot might be detained in Russia for ever, so

her elder sister Catherine arrived to fetch her home. The letters which Catherine Wilmot wrote from Russia are truly brilliant. She possessed a very special quality of mind blending vivacity and detachment, as one having while still young both known the world and finished with it; added to this she had a penetrating understanding, a sparkling descriptive style, and the raillery that goes with an unimplicated point of view. She was impressed by the volcanic goodness of her hostess but by little else.

It was natural that Princess Daschkaw lived passionately in the past, that is, in the reign of Catherine II, where she had played a great role, although Alexander I was on the throne and a new era had begun. Catherine Wilmot's clear eyes saw the aged courtiers who surrounded them for the place-hunters they were. Favour was foremost in their minds, for they had lived under a despot and they knew what fantastic tyranny could do. She noted the contradictions in a people who were even then at war with France yet who aped the French in everything. She gives an interesting description of the Russian women who, holding their property in their own right, were independent and capable, and as interested in crops as a farmer. But she also saw extravagance sending great estates helter-skelter into the hands of merchants, and she records that when she asked for Russian books to read no one could give her anything but childish fables. The marvellous flowering of literature that came later in the same century as yet showed no sign.

Catherine Wilmot finally had to return without her sister, as the pain of separation was more than could be rightly

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inflicted on the ardent, generous, but ailing and lonely Princess. When the letters of Catherine cease it is a grief to the reader, for at times she writes like sun on frost, but Martha matured among such abundant life, and the second half of her correspondence is written less from the point of view of a girl overwhelmed with attentions, and more that of a woman who finds her favoured position exposing her to attacks of irrational violence. Her devotion to the Princess does not lessen, but the time comes when her sense of being in an alien country, added to the uncertainties of war, make her decide to return home. This she does, meeting shipwreck on the way, but eventually arriving safely.

The book is fascinating, clarifying and historically important. One has to remember that what is recorded is partly of an age earlier than that forming at the time. But it should also be noted that these were Irishwomen whose racial characteristics peculiarly fitted them to judge the Russians truly. Their account is valuable for its authenticity and its entrances by its charm and vivid interest

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MAKE IT NEW. Essays by EZRA POUND.  
Faber & Faber. 12s. 6d.

MEN WITHOUT ART. By WYNDHAM LEWIS  
Cassell. 10s. 6d.

IN 1917, we learn from the introduction to Mr. Pound's essays, he undertook the foreign editorship of the *Little Review* 'in order that the work of Joyce, Lewis, Eliot and myself might appear promptly and regularly and in one place' That was about the time, too, of *Blast* and *The Egoist*. Of the four names, Pound's must have been the best known and the most revered in those days. A few extracts of *Ulysses* had begun to appear, *Tarr* had

been serialized; *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and a few other poems by Eliot were being treasured by the *avant-garde* of poetry readers – but Mr. Pound must have been the bigwig and generalissimo of the little band. Since then Joyce, Lewis and Eliot have all advanced to positions of first-rate importance, they have left their uncle behind, and Mr. Pound, a rather mysterious figure, has dodged about Europe dropping little expletive articles and verses in the background. For a time, indeed, he seems to have been forgotten altogether, except for an 'Ezra' here and there in works of Mr. Lewis, and 'I wonder what Mr. P. believes' from Mr. Eliot, for the sake of old times. But then, as mysteriously as he disappeared, he began to come back with the new tide. The dedication of one of Mr. Eliot's poems to 'il mighior fabbro' undoubtedly had a good deal to do with his return; a tip like that, to the Eliot initiate, was far too good to miss. There was a perceptible rise in the Pound Critics began to reinvest, and Mr. F. R. Leavis, who can always be trusted to come in on a good thing, ransacked the poems for those which were least admirable, discovered *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and in his book of 'new bearings' hailed Mr. Pound as, at last, a major poet. Since then we have had a *Selected Poems* (uniform with the *Selected Poems* of Mr. Eliot), the *Cantos*, *A B C's of Reading* and of *Economics*, a *How to Read*, an *Active Anthology*. Mr. Pound is definitely in the good books of the Cambridge minority movement; but despite these advances the wider public still prefers Joyce, Lewis, and Eliot.

*Make It New* is the first of a series of Mr. Pound's collected essays. The title, and the introduction, are the only parts of it which may be said to represent this new, this bigger and better, Mr. Pound; they are in his best algebraical style. But the essays themselves take us back to the good old days of *Blast*, and further even

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than that, to the *Quarterly Review* of 1912. We are back among the enthusiasms of Mr. Pound's newly discovered European culture: the Troubadours, Arnaut Daniel, Elizabethan Classicists, Greek translators, French poets (the Symbolists and after), Henry James, Rémy de Gourmont, and Cavalcanti. They are full of good matter, especially in the translations of poems, but so marred by slipshod writing and critical ineptitudes that one wonders how Mr. Pound can have allowed them to be reprinted in their present form. Even the shifts of periodical journalism – 'and that will be enough for this week' – the critical short cuts and fudge to which a reviewer must sometimes inevitably stoop, are preserved here as holy relics. Mr. Pound seems to give the impression, in his introductory notes, that the dates, the circumstances of these essays, are of immense critical importance. They are still, of course, of some interest; they represent a part of Mr. Pound's real culture (as opposed to the sort of taste which has since produced *Active Anthology*); and for the historian the post-war literature, the essay on French poets, for example, may be a valuable little signpost of the past. But even Mr. Pound's *good taste*, as we see it in places here, is far from being the pure gold we might have expected. He discovers, with a blare of surprise, what a good many people must have known already. Grant him the troubadours, the Chinese poems, which in a sense he has made his own. But had no one heard of Cavalcanti in 1910? And what of the French poets – Corbière, Laforgue, etc. – whom he assumes to be unknown to his 'Anglo-American reader,' who has however 'heard in a general way of Baudelaire and Verlaine and Mallarmé'? (This is in 1918.) Who in fact is Mr. Pound's reader, addressed in this way? From his ABC books one might assume that Mr. Pound is the popularizer of his own strangely garnered culture; but then these books are

not popular at all, they are written in a mystical algebra which would baffle any reader except an initiate. To disentangle the genuine from the false in Mr. Ezra Pound is very difficult indeed – as the reader even of the early journalistic-academic essays in *Make It New* will discover to his cost. The collection, we are told, has a 'unity' of its own; but except that we may recognize each part of it as being a piece in the Pound jigsaw, with no hope of ever fitting them all together, the assurance leaves us where we were.

Nevertheless, apart from his achievement as a poet, Mr. Pound has been, and still is, a considerable figure behind the scenes. He seems to have taught Mr. Eliot, for example, a great deal about versification. Even Mr. Wyndham Lewis, with whom he has far less in common, pays him more than perfunctory respect. But it is a relief to turn from Mr. Pound's mandarinic essays to *Men Without Art*. Whatever Mr. Lewis may lack of Mr. Pound's peculiar erudition he has a critical intelligence and a commonsense which make even a personal outburst significant by comparison. *Men Without Art* continues the examination of contemporary writers and thinkers which was begun in *The Art of Being Ruled*. There are chapters here on Hemingway, Faulkner, Eliot, I. A. Richards, Wyndham Lewis, Virginia Woolf, Henry James, Fénelon, Flaubert. The method, as those who have read his earlier criticism will expect, is cross-sectional; politics, philosophy, religion and the sciences blow a gale across the usually unruffled literary waters; not appreciation (though Mr. Lewis finds much to admire in some of these writers), but diagnosis, is his aim. It may be objected against Mr. Lewis's method that it distorts his subject before he examines it, just as the characters in his satires are freaked and frothed up into giant grotesques; but in spite of this distortion, he gives us a vivid and many-

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angled criticism which will be found in most cases to be remarkably true. And he can reveal a whole streak of rottenness in a writer which we have vaguely known but never properly explained. The slabs of Stein, for example, in Hemingway's stories are exposed at once; and even better, Mr. Lewis goes on to explain how they have got there. He quotes Stein and Hemingway side by side: it convinces. How excellent, too, is his description of the typical Hemingway-man's patter – uttered with 'bovine genius' so that it penetrates with a sort of beauty as might 'the folk-song of the baboon'! Hemingway gives us, he says, a sort of sub-literature, the monotonous undertone of the Middle-West folk-song; and the pieces of realistic reporting are, not so much written, as *stuck on*, like the real match-boxes on a Picasso portrait. He is equally good on Faulkner. From these he goes on to the assertion that the best literature today is whaleboned with satire (not, of course, true), and a large middle section of the book is devoted to a discussion of the means and aims of satire. He has a good word to say for himself, commends the *Apes* to his bolshie readers of the future, and ends with a really penetrating account of the interference, from all sides, to which any independent writer is submitted today. There are signs even, he suggests, that some future society, whether bolshie or Nazi, may consist of 'men without art.' This may not be the natural conclusion we should arrive at by reading the book up to that; but then Mr. Lewis, all through, asserts, discloses and explodes rather than argues. We do not read him so much for his conclusions (which are apt to be vague or are left over for another time), as for the bombs and sallies on the way. What he very frequently lacks in sensibility he makes up in pure energy. The element of enjoyment is strong even when he argues and criticises; better, we may feel, Lewis wrong, than Pound right.

BEASTS AND SAINTS. Translations by  
HELEN WADDELL. Constable. 5s.

THE order of the words in the title is noticeable – 'Beasts and Saints' not 'Saints and Beasts'; it is a deliberate and careful order. The translator, with her natural sympathy for mood, for the atmosphere of the mind, is humble on behalf of the desert hermits and Breton and Cornish and Irish saints whose lives have given her these stories; as they were humble and unassuming on their own behalf and on behalf of humanity. For it is the essence of most of these stories that they describe an equal relationship between creatures of two different kinds. There is no idea of condescension in them. Sometimes the animal is the more active in friendship: there were two otters who came to St. Cuthbert, after he had prayed all night standing in the sea up to his neck, and 'began to busy themselves warming his feet with pantings, and trying to dry them with their fur.' Sometimes the obvious kindness is from the saint to the animal: there is, for example, the story of St. Kevin's scrupulousness; he prayed with his hand stretched out through a window, and when a black-bird took it for her nest and laid an egg in it, he kept it stretched in the same position until the young birds were hatched and ready to fly. The first story is an account of a miracle, the second not; but in the atmosphere of the book the distinction does not seem important; what is important is that sympathy, the most delightful by-product of sanctity, that could make possible a relationship so equal and harmonious, where active and passive, man and beast, higher and lower, ceased to have any meaning: as the distinction between red and yellow becomes trivial when one looks at a flame. This is the general form of most of the stories. Some are more severe, stories of saints rebuking or converting animals; and in some the saint's humility is less a natural

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grace, a part of sympathy, than a position taken up on the advice of reason. The admirable story of St. Benno is an example of this: he commanded the frogs in the marsh where he was walking to stop croaking because they disturbed his contemplation; but when they had stopped,

he called to mind the saying – ‘*O all ye beasts and cattle, bless ye the Lord*’ And fearing lest the singing of the frogs might perchance be more agreeable to God than his own praying, he again issued his command to them, that they should praise God in their accustomed fashion and soon the air and the fields were vehement with their conversation.

Even this short quotation will show clearly enough the charm of the book, both in its substance and in the passionately simple prose of the translation; a charm reflected in Mr. Robert Gibbings’ lively woodcuts of fishes and dragons and all kinds of birds and animals. Indeed there is almost a danger that the charm of the stories may obscure their straightforward beauty; the remoteness of the setting and the naiveté of some of the authors (a different naiveté from any modern kind) may diminish the stature of the saints for some readers; just as the broken accent of a foreigner makes people feel that he is younger than he is, and for some reason touching, before they notice that his voice is beautiful, or what he is saying important. Perhaps this does not matter, so long as people enjoy a book that is before all things meant to be enjoyed.

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DOSTOIEVSKY. AN INTERPRETATION. By  
NICHOLAS BERDYAEV. Sheed & Ward.  
6s.

It is probable that of all the influences to which the War generation was submitted that of Dostoevsky was the profoundest.

To us his books came as an Apocalypse; and just before the War began our wide and innocent eyes were staring at visions of heaven and hell. That he was other things beside, a product of Russian conditions, a humorist, a specialist in humanity, a patriot; that, as Lytton Strachey says, he gave us his walking-stick and his ‘laughter of loving kindness’ for support through an illuminated world, that meant nothing. Like General Gordon and the Bible, there was Dostoevsky and there was us; and we thought of ourselves as people, at the feet of a great daimon, alone in a Waste Land.

Able encouraged by Mr. Middleton Murry’s book, it became a kind of obsession, as when one reader, it is rumoured (in love with Stavrogin) felt called to imitate his behaviour in the matter of the General’s ear. From these states recovery can be rapid. A sudden ‘I’m damned if I’m going to be suggested into biting Colonel Blank’ and it was over. The thick red books with their awful secrets were put away, and no more time allowed to brood on the bitter mystery of Nikolai Stavrogin.

Something like real fear has kept his books shut ever since. Until now M. Berdyaev’s book has come to open them. While since then other forces have been at work. Aldous Huxley’s icy appraisal. ‘Dostoevsky’s characters are typical Russian parvenus to consciousness.’ Life is not ‘spiritual’ enough or ‘sinful’ enough . . . ‘to satisfy ex-moujiks suddenly enriched with all the gradually accumulated cultural wealth of Europe.’ His tragedies are all ‘tragedies of mental licentiousness,’ the ‘unnecessary tragedies of self-made men,’ and so fundamentally worthless. It was some perception of this that caused an earlier disciples’ revolt and disenchantment. While, a little later, the flood of White emigrés, gave rise to a certain cynical disillusion as to the processes of the Russian mind.

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How far is Mr. Huxley's criticism true? It gives the measure of M. Berdyaev that he faces this criticism and admits it. His book is by far the most penetrating study there has been; more than a literary study, an examination of Dostoievsky in relation to final causes, love, evil, freedom, the forms of society; above all, in relation to the present and the future of the world. He speaks of Stavrogin's 'malignant and aimless eroticism,' admits the 'irreparable spiritual lack' in Russia, untrained throughout the centuries, as Europe has been trained, in the possibilities of human love.

It is for M. Berdyaev to show that his authority rests on something deeper even than the understanding of the relations between men and women. His noble and balanced mind (and what a relief he is after the all-too-sclavonic ecstasies of some writers) accounts for the greatness of Dostoievsky, not finally as a novelist, but as the man who assembled the forces of an unparalleled genius to warn the whole world that it had fallen into the third temptation of our Lord; demanded of the evil Power that he should turn the stones into bread. We need not criticise its economics, to say all Socialism rests on the assumption that man is sufficient for man, that his first concern is with material well-being; with which goes implicit denial of the spiritual life, the knowledge of God, the hope of immortality. This is the specific work of Antichrist, described in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, the profoundest parable of our age. There, with superhuman foresight, Dostoievsky saw the choice that lay before the generations ahead.

Now the Antichrist he feared has come out of Russia herself. As again he feared; and now 'The Possessed' stands out, unique, as a story whose every event was *about* to happen.

As M. Berdyaev makes plain – so does Dostoievsky. Now that Antichrist has

come, and every man has to make up his mind on which side we see Dostoievsky standing alone, the man with more than a prophet's knowledge of our catastrophe, but also with the secret of our redemption.

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THE NOISE OF HISTORY By JOHN LEHMANN.  
Hogarth Press. 3s 6d.

THESE poems and short pieces follow 'fairly exactly,' the author tells us, the order in which they were written, and so trace 'the course of a gradually developing point of view.' The prose, much of which was written in Berlin and Vienna, begins in 1933 at the time of the Nazi rise to power, and ends shortly after the suppression of the February insurrection in Vienna.

The ideas underlying the sequence are simple and familiar. From a world of 'tricky business deals, the revelations of spiritual love, and artistic controversies in the drawing-rooms of the elegant' Mr. Lehmann turns to extol the future with a lyrical assurance, seeking in anticipation that vantage point from which

As if from the top of a mountain  
The years of illness seem minute and far,  
A valley rubbish-heap among the sun-swept ranges.

As an example of literary craft the volume is unexciting. In the poems Mr. Lehmann's thoughts and emotions are referred to rather than actively present in the texture and structure of his writing. Often his images are insufficiently realised. When he writes of

. . . those whose shapes are seen

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Childish against an urn or by the raft  
Knotting wet ropes before . . .

the shapes in question are really not seen at all. This looseness of apprehension is most noticeable where it is most important that the reader's sympathy should be gained. Here are the representatives of positive human values in a negative world.

The sun has burnt their faces and their open necks, their quiet hands and the smooth bare legs above the dusty socks and only pair of shoes. Their eyes are watchful and secretly laughing. Their talk is of football and swimming, or how to mend ski-ing boots, or the places they have seen in their wanderings. And some, too, have caught the fire of an idea, and discuss a new shape of life, and the struggle that will achieve it.

One feels, uneasily, that it is a matter of chance whether these simple athletes catch the fire of the Fascist idea, or the Marxist idea, or (what is more probable) the Buchmanite idea. Their talk is of football and swimming, and it is likely that they would have been the first to respond to the most popular of the Georgians when he envisaged those who took arms in the world war as 'swimmers into cleanness leaping.' The urge towards a new way of life, a change of heart, is commendable; but it is doubtful if the new life can be sung into being; and it is prudent in the meantime to enquire in what direction our poets would lead us. Poetic afflatus, unsupported by an alert and adult intelligence, may do more to confuse than resolve our present difficulties.

Mr. Lehmann's prose pieces, closer to actual scenes and events, are more successful than his poems. Suffering and fear are genuine presences in these sketches of oppressed and stricken cities.

RESURRECTION. By W GERHARDI Cassell.  
7s. 6d.

THE ENDLESS FURROW. By A. G. STREET.  
Faber. 7s. 6d.

CAPTAIN NICHOLAS. By HUGH WALPOLE.  
Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

AT SEA By A CALDER-MARSHALL. Cape.  
7s. 6d

THREE MEN DIE. By SARAH G MILLIN.  
Chatto & Windus 7s. 6d

MR. GERHARDI bases his novel on an unusual experience of his own. While sleeping in his flat he found that he was in what he names his 'astral body' actually moving about the room. He was connected by a band of light with the body which still lay on the bed, and he could with ease and swiftness pass through the walls and rise to the ceiling. After making a round of his flat and noting various things which he afterwards verified he returned to the figure on the bed and re-entered it.

This happened just before Mr. Gerhardt started to dress for a ball. His book is the span of the ball, and his strange experience is used as a lamp which he plays on his fellow guests. He tells everyone he meets of what has so recently happened to him, and their reactions are varieties of vapidity until he meets a scientist who discusses with him Dunne's *An Experiment with Time* (How the interest in this book mounts and spreads, an engineer having most aptly given the machine age mathematical proof of immortality!) They recall Dunne's theory that each of us consists of an infinite number of 'Observers' of whom only the lowest is perishable. They decide that Observer 2 must have a body and that it was in this four-dimensional one that Mr. Gerhardt had moved about his rooms. It will be seen how excitingly full of possibilities these suppositions are, and as Mr.



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Gerhardi's sophisticated Ariel wit plays with every person and incident with a kind of triple vision of seeing the thing in itself, while he also sees himself seeing it, and with great satisfaction sees himself seeing himself seeing it, he is clearly the very person to be many Observers at once. The theme and the attitude appeared perfect for a book in which Mr. Gerhardi contrived to slip back into an indefinite number of Observers, and one was tingling with anticipation as to how life as lived at the ball would appear from these far extending viewpoints. But Mr. Gerhardi, like most of us, is crippled by seeing himself, that is the self now walking about this world, as a uniquely interesting phenomenon, and he is lured away from Dunne into the Proustian evocation of his own past. He has undeniably a great gusto for immortality in terms of the things he has done while travelling and loving as Mr. Gerhardi. He plays with everyone he encounters, much as though they were bright gas-filled balloons which he mischievously strikes to inconsequence with the bladder of his own supercilious impishness; and then he introduces two of his friends, Max Fisher and Bonzo. These two characters are drawn with a masterly deftness. With Bonzo he leaves the ball for a time, and in the Green Park Mr. Gerhardi summons up his past. If the Victorian Heaven of endless musical felicity came in time to appal active modern minds, what is to be said for the Proustian-Dunne-Gerhardi conception of an endless existence for our past on this earth? It obviously depends upon how we have spent our time, and it causes one to shudder at the thought of the importance of how one occupies one's future. Since Mr. Gerhardi chose to extend backwards into the past, where his own activities were alone to be recalled, instead of outwards where a wider view might have been possible, one can only suppose that Mr. Gerhardi likes immensely

what he did. This is what it was. He went to Tunis to try and form a compatible Arabian harem. He recalls the difficulties of finding even the first recruit to his household, and as in the end it proved impossible, a past of numerous matings with bodies brown and bodies white is established for all eternity. As a past it is often funny, fairly bawdy, and entirely paltry, but Mr. Gerhardi has done it and it cannot die.

When Mr. Gerhardi returns from the ball he sleeps and is again in his astral body Bonzo appears. He realizes that Bonzo is also in his astral body, and together they move into freedom, into an ecstatic participation in a harmonious universe. Bonzo had undergone an unsuccessful operation on the morning after the ball, and it is his death that permits Mr. Gerhardi to become a joyous guest of the dead. Regretfully he returns to his body and regretfully we finish a book that is full of searchlights casting gay beams into the night.

*The Endless Furrow* is a compound of sense and serenity. Baffled town dwellers will read it with deep satisfaction and feel solidity under their feet and well-being a thing possible of attainment. Mr. A. G. Street is now so well known for his writing on country life that a description of his quality is hardly necessary. His present story is extremely simple, and tells of a boy with great capacity for work who longs to be a farmer and who in the end becomes a most able one. He is first apprenticed to a grocer, a man so sapient, so sound, that the training he gives seems the ideal one for forming true judgments on all matters pertaining to man. The lad Jim Horton is shown at each stage of his career, and he never makes a mistake or becomes caught in wasteful conflict. It sounds as though the story must have something dull or smug when each step in the ascent is met with labour and foresight and rewarded by success. Yet every

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page is as fresh and interesting as though it were a revelation that gratification can be got from sensible living. In the end the old farmer having cared for his fields and his beasts through the long years of the war learns that his only son has been killed. There is no one now to take over what he has wrought all his life to perfect. Crippled and alone he still gives his last labour to the land. Mr. Street has a healing power and it lies in his making earth, growth, and the seasons his trinity of reality so that when his characters have disciplined themselves into serving these they stand rooted and integral as trees.

*Captain Nicholas* is good, but it is also faintly vapid like a dish containing excellent ingredients which a too relaxing atmosphere has caused to melt. Mr. Walpole introduces a family living in Smith Square who are much the usual family – devoted, silly mother, nice ten-year-old father, and knowing son and daughter. The house in Smith Square shelters as well as these a grandmother, an aunt and an uncle. These people are all genuinely fond of each other. The fondness is, of course, that good British fondness stopping decently short of understanding; but the general feeling is good. The aunt is a ninny and knows it, the uncle is a man sincerely trying to find spiritual order, and the son is both worried that he cannot fall in love, and chilled by the nihilism of his generation. The uncle and son are perhaps the best things in the book, and as they develop unmistakable intimations of solidity appear.

Captain Nicholas is the brother of the devoted mother and he turns up unexpectedly after ten years of silence. He brings with him his small daughter Lizzie whose stores of sophistication make 'What Maisie Knew' seem nothing. Captain Nicholas is given a warm welcome. Left alone for a moment he slips into his pocket some change that the silly aunt

had left on the table and thinks he may find it useful to stay on for a bit. He stays, indeed he stays for a year, and he is so engagingly frank a rotter, so plausible, with wits so much quicker than those of his respectable relatives, that the house which was amicable but dull before his arrival is positively improved by his presence. Then he begins to borrow money, continues to borrow it, induces each person to disclose the one thing they would have preferred to hide so that they find it best to placate him. He also borrows various *objets d'art* to enjoy for a few days in his room, his sense of beauty being entirely real, and these he finds it convenient to sell.

When Captain Nicholas is not with his family he is with criminals long known and newly met. It is precisely the contrast between his family and his friends that delights Captain Nicholas. To him his friends know life as it actually is, while his family are living in the softness of self-delusion idiotically believing in love, the family, and God. He realizes quite truly that his type become more numerous every day, the difficulty of living increasing their lawlessness and violence. Their lack of a livelihood makes them dislike those who have incomes, but their destruction of all values makes them even more contemptuous of those who have retained theirs. This is an age of detraction. Many feel that value has died since they can no longer find it in themselves or in others. Some, of course, feel released by its demise, but who can mistake that it is the major theme in literature to-day? We have had hollowness until the signs of spiritual starvation are everywhere, and each writer is saying 'There is no value,' or more rarely, 'Value lies here.' Then how apposite for Mr. Walpole to make values the theme of his book, and his story is natural and interesting when the soft, cosy mother realizes that disintegration is taking place

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in every member of her household. She combats her brother and sends him packing on the single issue of his values against theirs. Mr. Walpole handles his main idea and his human, if well-known, characters so wisely that one wishes the whole book were not somehow blanketed in a sauce of usualness.

Mr. Calder-Marshall sends to sea two young people married the day before at a registry office. They take a boat and row out to sea. The young husband rows senselessly far, they bathe from the boat, an oar is lost. Perhaps she did it when she dived, though as he had failed to ship the oars the fault is clearly his. They search and fail to find it. They quarrel. She hates him for his incompetence. He hates her for her mistrust of him. His mistrust of himself endured since childhood rises. They drift during a long hot day, through a storm, all through the night. The boat is old, which is a threat the more, and their insecurity increases the insecurity they feel in each other so that the quarrelling is renewed again and again. Her parents have always quarrelled, she sees herself continuing the life her parents lived, she sees her weak, brutal father in her young husband. She loathes him, loathes herself and in the early morning jumps from the boat and swims away to drown. He leaps in, and after a fight in the water he brings her unconscious back to the boat, revives her, and now knowing the worst in themselves and in each other they feel union between them. This is a difficult theme out of which to build a novel, but Mr. Calder-Marshall does it with originality and vividness. His style is sharp and eager, if at times it sinks to affectation, and subtlety is shown when these warring child minds sink back into their memories. Their sense of emptiness in themselves, of containing nothing but self-scorn, and their dismay at how little support the other has to give is excellently done.

The boat's failure to return naturally rouses the village to query and eventually to rescue, so the village people are used as contrast to the two at sea, and this, too, is handled with skill. The entire book shows marked technical ability.

In *Three Men Die* Mrs. Millin tells of a woman who poisons two of her husbands and then her only son. Her character is described with clearness and economy and her life with her three husbands is given with real objective ability. The woman's likeableness, industry and thrift, her love of money and lack of feeling are immediately established. The whole presentation is pointed and actual, from the small house in Johannesburg to the lives and deaths of the three dull, hapless men who died at her hands. One after another they ceased to give what her grasping nature demanded and each died. Every separate part of the story is as real as a block in the hand, yet when the book is finished, and one has watched attentively as at a process done slowly, precisely that nothing may be missed, there comes a burst of bewilderment at how the mind of a poisoner works. We saw the dry, selfish logic of the woman, we noted that people found her attractive and then had moments of repulsion when they sensed something unnatural, but is lack of feeling enough to let logic dictate, and is that precisely the abnormality and horror of her type? If a poisoner's reactions are indeed so simple, then Mrs. Millin has drawn the character well, and one is mistaken in feeling that she has failed to disclose the sources of action in her heroine.

There is some play made at the end of the book with a theory of connection between sex and destruction, but though there is undoubtedly a deep play of the opposites here, it is not illumined by its introduction, nor is it easy to apply it to the story.

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### AT THE PLAY

WHAT is a good actress to do when the dramatist requires of her to be a bad actress, and leaves it uncertain when she is to be a good actress acting as a bad actress, and when she is to be a good actress acting the part of a sincere, unhappy woman as a bad actress might see the part if she would forget she was an actress? That is one of the problems which Mr. Priestley sets Beatrix Lehmann in *Eden End* (Duchess Theatre); and it was far more interesting than the play, or anything in the play except the drunken scene between Stella's husband and her brother. Miss Lehmann did not solve the problem. No actress could solve it, unless the part was written by a very great genius so that no doubt could be left as to when Stella was Stella herself, when Stella was Stella acting, and when Stella was Stella acting her self as well as her part. Some critics have mentioned Tchekov in connection with *Eden End*: but the influence is not Tchekov's, but Pirandello's. Here is Pirandello without subtlety, without style, and with only an elementary sense of character. At first the play threatened to be a new *Magda*. In Dr. Kirby's home in the North of England in 1912 we meet Dr. Kirby, his daughter Lilian, who keeps house, his son Wilfred, home on leave from West Africa. There is, too, Geoffrey Farrant, an old suitor of Stella, the daughter who left home for the theatre, and is now in a mild, squire-like way, courting Lilian. The first act proceeded for a long time on a level of monotonous dullness which was oppressive, and when Stella returns there is only a threat of lightening. She has failed as an actress; but tells no one except the old family servant. She is married, as Lilian guesses from the mark of a ring on her finger (why did not Stella say the ring had been a convenience in hotels?); she has left her husband nine months ago, and has been

married for three years. She thinks she wants to leave the stage and live at Eden End. Her father tells her he has heart disease. Her old lover returns to her; and then, summoned by Lilian, Stella's husband turns up. Whenever a dramatic moment promises, Mr. Priestley shies away from it and stages one more of the perpetual dudogues of which the play consists. There is no coherence at all between the persons – no unity peculiar and essential to them. Mr. Priestley, it is true, tries to provide one by emphasizing their ignorance of the catastrophe of 1914; but this is not peculiar to *Eden End*, or to this family. It was the privilege in fact of all English families in 1912 – except perhaps Lord Roberts.

There are two good scenes in the play. One where Charles Appleby (admirably played by Ralph Richardson) and Wilfred Kirby have a solemn drunken discussion – it is funny, though far too long; the other between Stella and Lilian, where Lilian tells her sister what she has suffered and what Stella's character really is. One of the play's gravest flaws is Stella's failure to tell her father of her marriage, and how unsatisfactory it is. She has just seen her husband at their agent's in London. She knows what he is like. She would never have taken the risk of leaving her sick father to discover the fact of her marriage.

Mr. Johnstone, the author of *The Moon in the Yellow River* (Westminster Theatre) is a young Irish dramatist whose play is of more importance, more beauty, and nearer reality than any play acted in London since Mr. O'Casey's *Within the Gates*. It is a play of rebel Ireland – of the days of the trouble, when old friends were foes, and in the mists a man met dim enemies whose faces were dreadfully familiar. A man's foe was himself. There are three themes in the play, each sufficient for a drama: the old theme that the machine is the enemy of life: the theme

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## BELL

## Reviews

that if a man appeals to force he will find it is himself he is fighting: and the tragic motive of a father who hates his daughter because, to save her life, his wife's has been sacrificed. Poignant as is this theme, and beautifully rendered in the final scene between Dobelle (Esme Percy) and his daughter Blanaid (Shelah Richards), it rather overweights the play. The two other themes are superbly presented. Pathos, anger, violence, farce, richness of language, swiftness of thought – all contribute to the devastating disaster. When the pure idealist is shot by the 'gunman' there was danger of anti-climax in the scenes between Tausch, the German responsible for the Power House, Commandant Lenigan and Dobelle. Mr. Johnstone triumphantly overcomes it. He has the great gift of philosophical dramatic writing, and he was helped by an excellent company. Esme Percy was rather too Oriental in some of his gestures, and hardly succeeded in persuading us that he had been a great engineer; but his impatience, his humour, and his pathos were astonishingly right. Geoffrey Kerton's Tausch could not have been better, save that he spoke too fast at times. Bryan Coleman as the disillusioned idealist, was as fine in his one-ideaed resolution as Fred O'Donovan in his part as Lenigan. Bryan Coleman's fall, when he was shot, was heart-rending in its finality. Marie Ault and Nan Munro gave perfect performances, and Tyrrell's Willie – the corner-boy turned rebel soldier – was touching, absurd and at moments queerly dignified.

The season at the Old Vic began with *Antony and Cleopatra*. Praise first. The production of Henry Cass is excellent – dignified, simple and allowing the play to go at a proper speed (too often exceeded by the actors). Maurice Evans as Cæsar and Sofaer as the Messenger were excellent – the minor parts were adequately played – Octavia more than

adequately. But this play is Antony and Cleopatra. Wilfrid Lawson's Antony was a piece of grave miscasting. He murdered the poetry; he was frequently inaudible; he was never in the least heroic, even in a histrionic way, and seemed only at ease in the feasting scene. Mary Newcombe as Cleopatra was almost all one could wish – except Cleopatra. She had no charm, let alone fascination. Here is a dull-sergeant of love, not a mistress. Often her speaking was good; but she never ceased to play at being Cleopatra, and too often seemed to have a suspicion it was odd that she should be so playing. This great tragedy is a fire. It begins in the little crackers of Charmian and Iris' easy wit, mounts to flame, becomes white-hot, and then sinks into the decent glow of the great death-scene, and the uneasy ash of Cæsar's final entry. But it burns always. Hardly ever was there a fierce flame at the Old Vic: no aspiration, no transcendence, none of that rendering mortality immortal which is the play's very essence.

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# Life and Letters

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November 1934

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# Life and Letters

November 1934

## Affairs of Men

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### IN EUROPE NOW

The murders of King Alexander and M. Barthou appear to have plunged Europe – for a moment – into a precarious state of peace.

The supplementary casualties – M. Sarraut, M. Chéron and a Chef de Police – have all been French. France has been, rightly, infuriated by the complete absence of the most elementary precautions. The *amour propre* of the local authorities – ‘*nous autres nous sommes de bons types*’ – particularly sensitive in a town with the reputation of Marseilles, may account for a good deal, but hardly for the absence of ambulances. Also troops the whole world over have been known to line streets without offending civic pride.

M. Barthou could have been saved if anyone had had a bit of string! The whole affair was both a tragedy and a muddle.

\* \* \*

Europe breathed again and prayers must have gone up from many

a heart – and head – when the assassin proved to be a Croat with no Italian connection. The farm in Hungary where Hungarian officers watched Croatian nationalists shooting at images of King Alexander is a little too highly coloured to be true. We had always assumed that in order to kill a public man, no knowledge of his features or his anatomy was necessary.

The tension between Hungary and Yugo-Slavia is a thousandfold compensated for by the relaxation in the strained relations between Yugo-Slavia and Italy, who has shown something more than diplomatic correctness. The official press of both countries has behaved admirably, but the small local papers continue to hiss, expressing, alas! more accurately the genuine national feelings.

\* \* \*

King Alexander was a man of considerable ability, iron nerve, and great personal bravery. But he was brought up in the Russian and German schools of thought and behaviour. He natu-

## Affairs of Men

rally found it easier to deal with dangers than with difficulties. The difficulties were enormous. Three races with diverse claims and cultures. The Serbs, who fought like heroes, had no natural taste for the Croats, who lived like civilized people. There is always the same problem in war. The man who fights and the object which is being fought for frequently have so little connection.

\* \* \*

Prince Paul, the new chief Regent, is infinitely more liberal-minded than his cousin. Educated at Oxford, his outlook is tolerant, wise and humane. It remains to be seen whether his personality will be strong enough to overrule his advisers, and enforce his own point of view.

\* \* \*

M. Doumergue's appointments surprised everyone. It had generally been assumed that M. Marquet, the ex-Neo-Socialist leader, Minister of Labour and Mayor of Bordeaux, would be made Minister of the Interior.

M. Marquet is an administrator of ruthless integrity and unrelenting efficiency. It was felt by persons of all parties that he alone among French politicians, being affiliated to no group, and having no personal ties with the 'fonctionnaires' of any Government department, could have tackled the problem of the police and overhauled the most important and most out-of-hand of all the French Ministries.

But the 'Intérieure' is *the* great political tit-bit, and, the Congrès of the Radical Party at Nantes being then

impending, M. Maichandean was appointed.

\* \* \*

We do not realize the infinite blessing vouchsafed to England by the infinitesimal services members of parliament are able to render to their constituents. If these same disabilities existed in France, many scandals would be averted and many problems solved.

\* \* \*

M. Pierre Laval also came as a surprise. The general view had been that M. Pietri would succeed M. Barthou as Foreign Minister. Before the formation of the Doumergue Ministry, M. Laval's political shares were extremely low. If not under a shadow he was undoubtedly in the shade. He had amassed a considerable fortune, and financial successes are never *bien vu* in French political life. You are in far greater danger from your money than from your morals. M. Laval is an Auvergnat, what our serial writers call 'swarthy' (his friends call him 'Pedro'). He is extremely intelligent, and the key-note of his intelligence is flexibility. It will be interesting to see what effect a change of gear into suppleness will have on the Quai d'Orsay. M. Laval is reputed to desire above all things closer relations with Italy. But French foreign policy is, for the moment, a none too convenient jigsaw. Russia, Italy and the Little Entente (assuming that Poland has been wiped off the map of hope) might well embarrass any Paris. There are not enough apples to go round. And no second apple ever gives much pleasure.

## Affairs of Men

The Spanish Rebellion is over, leaving a lot of loose heroism lying about on every side. Normally in Spain, when a plot is brewing, it is discussed with the voices of paroquets in every café. The day, the hour and the number of guns are all known. One indeterminate factor remains – lending interest to the scene – the betrayer. In this case the Catalans counted on General Batet – a Catalan – but he and his troops remained loyal to the Government. In the Asturias the fighting was extremely bitter. Mercy was neither given, asked for, nor even envisaged. Spain is perhaps the only country where the old-fashioned anarchist still exists. She is a country of tradition, and the aristocracy of anarchism has not yielded to those minor arrivistes – communism and socialism.

Some of the details of the uprising are extremely interesting. Señor Largo Caballero, himself a mason much respected by the Spanish worker, was undoubtedly at the bottom of what happened. But he was not at the head of it. Nor was Señor Prieto. All the leaders were local enthusiasts. There was in fact no leadership.

Señor Besteiro, the universally-beloved President of the Cortes, stood out for constitutional methods. He led the small right wing of Spanish Socialism. Now he can say: 'I told you so' – a phrase that brings no consolation to upright and disinterested men.

\* \* \*

The Spaniard is singularly unlike the foreign conception of a Spaniard. Many a good Englishman goes to church on Sunday with a subconscious

feeling that he is atoning for past week-days and endowing future ones. A Spaniard goes to a bull-fight and purges himself of his blood-lust. Do we remember often enough that cruelty to children is unknown in Spain?

\* \* \*

Señor Lerroux has observed intermittent loyalties that have been returned in kind. But his government is showing a wise, and almost dilatory, clemency. The ring-leaders of the Rebellion (Señor Caballero was arrested – in his own house! – at the last possible moment) are overlooked rather than searched for.

Many experienced people would prefer to be in prison in Spain than in any other country in the world. You are irrelevantly interred and almost certainly released. Your incarceration – to whatever party you belong – is regarded by the authorities as an honour rather than a slur. Not to have been in prison is, for a person of principle, faintly derogatory; to be in prison rarely implies any ultimate risk.

\* \* \*

The Protestant German Church has won a sounding victory – Herr Hitler, with his customary absolutism, has capitulated completely. One wonders whether, looking into the glass, he finds a face to save. But to a supernatural phenomenon, such as he is, these problems no doubt have but an ill-reflected reality.

It is clearly no more risky to be an Anti-Nazi than to be a Nazi. Roehm, Ernst, Heines, Jaeger, Müller, how much more reputable to be sacrificed on our own altars!

## Affairs of Men

One is frequently asked why one should feel so much more passionately anti-Nazi than anti-Communist. Why should German atrocities outrage us so much more than Russian atrocities? The answer, surely, is (and many White Russians are of that opinion), that Communism contains the germ of an idea. However much you may dislike that idea, *any* idea contains inherent reputability, whereas the Nazi conception of life is retrogressive barbarism unrelieved even by a misguided flame.

\* \* \*

In the world of to-day tolerance has got to be a passionate, provocative thing, losing its own essence of philosophic detachment. Here lies the ultimate tragedy. In order to preserve, you are compelled to diminish the quality of what you are preserving.

\* \* \*

*Mot de la fin:* (with acknowledgments to an Italian lady's maid): "As we die so much, why kill?"

### AT HOME

Opposition to the Sedition Bill – 'Incitement to Disaffection Bill' is what the Admiralty and the Attorney-General like it to be called – has not been effective in getting it withdrawn; but it has succeeded in wringing some valuable concessions from the Government. One of the most notable is the amendment whereby the signature of a High Court judge is now necessary before a search warrant can be obtained. This represents a real gain, though the pernicious principle of the

General Search Warrant remains. It was particularly disheartening that the amendment seeking to exempt the printer from penalty was not taken, because the Bill as it stands creates a situation in which a nervous printer not only can, but almost certainly will on occasion, exercise a general censorship over writer and publisher, refusing to print quite harmless statements, which in his judgment either are, or might by the Law Officers of the Crown be interpreted as, seditious. Contrary to the ludicrous pretence of the Government – and especially of the Prime Minister, who has actually had the temerity to insult the intelligence of the public by pretending that the Bill is a blow struck *for* liberty – this measure is a potential weapon of general tyranny, not merely an *ad hoc* device to protect a few simple-minded sailors who cannot be trusted to know their own minds. The only comfort possible, and it is not much, is the reflection that at a moment of crisis any Government can, and almost certainly would, take upon itself powers beside which those it possessed under the Sedition Bill would look mild and innocuous. The battle has been lost, but the casualties inflicted on the enemies of freedom have been severe, and the campaign has probably done more than we yet know to awaken our democracy to the defence of its rights. The National Council for Civil Liberties deserves much credit for the way in which it has focussed the opposition. There has been something impressive in seeing the Society of Friends, the Communist Party, the Church of England and other denominations and the Labour Party and

## Affairs of Men

Co-operative movement sharing a common platform in the assault.

\* \* \*

The amazing performances of Messrs. Scott's and Black's Comet and of the Dutch machine in the Mildenhall-Melbourne Air Race administered a severe shock to the complacency of the British Air Ministry and the people who have planned the forthcoming England-Australia Air Mail Service. The Dutch effort was particularly striking, as the machine was an ordinary commercial air liner, carrying passengers and mails, and was only prevented by ill-luck on the final stage from putting up an even more impressive performance. Now that we have seen what can be done in the way of speed by an aeroplane which has already proved its trustworthiness and is comfortable, we have clearly got to revise our ideas of what is a reasonable commercial time-schedule for this journey. Englishmen who live in the East have for long deplored the superior record of the Dutch in this matter; now the speeds achieved in the race have produced an immediate call for revision of the British programme. The criticism applies not only to the Australian route, but to our air lines generally. It is understood that faster machines are coming, but even when they are ready and in commission they will be 20 miles an hour slower than those used by the Dutch, and 20 miles an hour over a distance of 11,000 miles means a serious discrepancy. There is more than a suspicion that decisions relating to civil air development reside too exclusively in the hands of elderly

groundsmen whose notions are obsolescent. Why not call in the practical pilots, who have done the job and know what is required?

\* \* \*

At the time of writing there seems to be some uncertainty whether or not the British Government intends to set up a committee of inquiry into the traffic in armaments. The Senate inquiry in America, which, by the way, resumes its investigations this month, has thoroughly roused opinion over here, and there is widespread disgust at the revelations which it has produced of sharp and shady practice on the part of certain armament firms. A very good deal of apprehension exists lest an inquiry here might turn out to be nothing better than a white-washing manoeuvre, leaving the arms interests more firmly entrenched in their infamy than before. The Senate inquiry is invested with wide powers, including right of search in private and State offices, compulsory production of documents and power to compel the giving of evidence; a corps of paid experts is engaged to carry out the investigations. Nothing less than equal powers, it is felt, would be of any use here, and to confer them special legislation would be required. Moreover, by now the guilty have had ample warning, and unless they are more stupid than one has any right to suppose, their safes will have been cleared of at least the more grossly incriminating documents. For these reasons many who most desire to see the 'arms racket' ended feel that an inquiry set up by the British Government might do more harm than good. After all,

## Affairs of Men

there is not much need of further evidence: the essentials have long been known, and the American inquiry has dotted the i's and crossed the t's. What is now needed is national, and if possible international, action to put an end to a notorious scandal.

\* \* \*

The Minister of Transport's own rubicund beacon continues to outshine all others in the firmament he has created. Not since 'Jix' has any Minister contrived to keep himself so persistently before the public eye. He has a job that helps him, and it is said that he has appointed a publicity officer to see that the affairs of the Ministry are adequately represented in the Press. But none of us will grudge him his share of publicity, or more than it, if only he succeeds in bringing order and safety out of the chaos and perils of our streets. Can he do that? He is showing, at all events, immense energy and a good deal of imagination, and already he has given London and our provincial cities one reform which has proved itself an unmitigated blessing. The 'silence' order, welcomed from the word 'go,' after several weeks' trial has fully maintained the advantages claimed for it at the outset. The streets are quieter, movement is not seriously slower, and drivers and pedestrians are alike more careful as a result of the innovation. What is more, many motorists are learning to drive by daylight as well without the use of the horn, and the time may soon come when the sound of the hooter in our streets will have become – except in an emergency – as extinct as the cry of the Dodo.

This initial success has encouraged the Minister to try his hand at further experiments, notably the 'pedestrian crossings' or 'safety lanes'. It is too soon yet to judge of the effectiveness or otherwise of these: they have been tried on the Continent with conspicuous success, and there is no reason why they should not prove their value equally in London when the public has become educated in the use of them. At present a good deal of muddle persists. In particular, pedestrians show a rather natural reluctance to exercise the new right of way over vehicles which is conferred upon them by the new code, preferring to act on the bad old theory that in the matter of crossing the street humanity can best be classified into the quick and the dead. Their new priority at crossings is a definite privilege and with it comes the inevitable responsibility: they are under an extra obligation not to obstruct the motorist elsewhere. At present they are liable to a fine for loitering on recognised crossings (who wants to?), but may cross anywhere else they like without legal penalty for carelessness. Unpleasant as all this regulation in going about our business may be, it will almost certainly prove necessary to have more of it now that we have begun. There is no need to share the pessimism of the Minister of Transport's cynical colleague, who said 'Hore-Belisha is a great friend of mine and I want to see him transferred as quickly as possible to another Department.' Time will show whether our exuberant Minister has allowed his enthusiasm to run away with him. Fortunately or unfortunately for him, there is one very direct test by which



## Affairs of Men

the results of his efforts can be measured – the accident returns. So far these have shown no tendency in either direction sufficiently marked to suggest any moral; but the time will come. Before leaving the subject it must be said firmly and loudly that the design of the ‘Belisha beacons’ – round orange blobs on black-and-white sticks – are an offence to God and man. This, at any rate, must not be a permanency

\* \* \*

Within the last week or two Professor Bowley and Sir Josiah Stamp have voiced a plea for a quinquennial census instead of the decennial one which now suffices Authority. The plea is not only reasonable but ought positively to be accepted. The fundamental basis of all planning of our social and economic future is adequate, up-to-date knowledge. Without the relevant figures of population, occupations, etc., and the facts that reveal the trends and tendencies within our industrial and social framework the task of government, local and national, becomes impossibly handicapped. Once in ten years was often enough for a census when changes were slow or steady. Now that they are rapid and irregular the need of more frequent revisions of the data is evident. In the present period two considerations make it more than ever imperative: the first is the current change-over in industry from the North of England to the South, with all the problems it raises; the second is the fact that within the next few years the population of Britain will for the first occasion in modern times become stabilized and soon after will begin to decline, an

event of far-reaching significance for those engaged in ordering our communal life in all its aspects.

\* \* \*

Good news has come, none too soon, from the Middlesex County Council, which proposes to enforce the powers it has been granted by Act of Parliament to stop ribbon development along roads within its area. Ribbon development is one of the most wanton and uneconomic ways of ruining the country-side, as well as of destroying the amenities of those who are fraudulently induced to live in the new estates which it brings into ill-conditioned being, that uncontrolled private enterprise has yet conceived. It adds, moreover, materially and heedlessly to the traffic congestion, which is one of the worst causes of road-slaughter. It is urgently to be hoped that other county councils which possess such powers will exercise them without delay, and that those which do not will quickly take steps to acquire them.

\* \* \*

The Public Library Committee of the Westminster City Council is worried about the nature of many contemporary novels. The Committee thinks these books are unsuitable for the open shelves of a Public Library and for issue to young readers. They suggest that publishers should institute a censorship of novels – on the lines of the Film Censorship now in existence – so that in future Public Library buyers be spared the risk of buying deleterious fiction.

The simplest way for the West-

## Affairs of Men

minster Library Committee to solve its difficulty is also the most logical and the most correct – namely, not to buy any current novels at all.

What justification is there for the spending of public money on mere diversion-reading? Libraries are rate-supported in order to make available to those who cannot afford to buy them, accepted works of literature, technical and semi-technical books and books of reference. To use funds for the purchase of modern light fiction is to make the whole community pay for the amusement of a minority of its members. If diversion is to be a charge on the rates, there should be rate-supported cinemas, soda-fountains, greyhound tracks and even licensed houses in every district, at which anyone who chooses may gaze and drink for nothing. Is it suggested that rates be levied for these purposes? We find it hard to credit. But until such extension of free amusement becomes part of declared municipal policy there is no excuse for free supply by Public Libraries of ordinary light reading.

The issue-figures of Public Libraries would suffer by a ban on current fiction (and it is because Librarians are obsessed by issue-figures that the present system has developed); but equity and rightful use of public money are more important than the vanity of individuals.

Relevant to this question is the agitation now on foot in Sweden that borrowers from free-libraries (except borrowers from the main copyright library, from libraries with special collections, from children's libraries and borrowers who can produce evidence that they are unemployed) should pay an annual fee for their privilege. A similar regulation might be applied to those who wish to borrow modern fiction from the Public Libraries. The point is that everyone capable of paying for his or her *amusement* ought to be made to do so. We believe, however, that the right solution is that no Public Library should have on its shelves for free-lending any novel published less than ten years ago.

# The King of the Great Clock Tower

by W. B. Yeats

---

## THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE KING . . . (Dressed in red)  
THE QUEEN . . . (Dressed in orange with details in black or red)  
STROLLER . . . (Dressed in black with details in red)  
FIRST ATTENDANT . . . (Dressed in black. Bass voice)  
SECOND ATTENDANT . . . (Dressed in black. Tenor voice)

*(THE QUEEN should wear a beautiful impassive mask THE STROLLER: a wild half-savage mask. It should cover the upper part of his face. The lower part being hidden by his red beard)*

*When the stage curtain rises it shows an inner curtain, pale purple in colour. It may have a stencilled pattern of dancers. At the right and left side of the proscenium are a drum and gong THE ATTENDANTS stand by drum and gong; they slowly part the curtain, singing as follows:—)*

SECOND ATTENDANT. They dance all day that dance in Tir-na-nogue.

FIRST ATTENDANT. There every lover is a happy rogue.  
And should he speak, it is the speech of birds.  
No thought has he, and therefore has no words,  
No thought because no clock, no clock because  
If I consider deeply, lad and lass,  
Nerve touching nerve upon that happy ground,  
Are bobbins where all time is bound and wound.

SECOND ATTENDANT. O never may that dismal thread run loose;

FIRST ATTENDANT. For there the Hound that Oisín saw pursues  
The hornless deer that runs in such a fright;  
And there the woman clasps an apple tight,  
For all the clamour of a famished man;  
They run in foam, and there in foam they ran,  
Nor can they stop to take a breath that still  
Hear in the foam, the beating of a bell.

# The King of the Great Clock Tower

*(When the curtains are parted one sees to left the KING and QUEEN upon two thrones, which may be two cubes. There should be two cubes upon the opposite side to balance them. The background and the cubes are a rich blue. The background may be a curtain hung in a semi-circle, or a semi-circle of one foot Craig screens, so painted that the blue is darker below than above)*

*The TWO ATTENDANTS sit down by drum and gong, they remain facing the audience at either side of the stage, but a little in the shadow.)*

THE KING. A year ago this night, you walked into my house. I made you my Queen, yet neither I, nor any other man, know from what country you came. And now before our friends and courtiers here assembled, I ask you, not for the first time, where that country is, who and what you were before you became my Queen? You have kept silence long enough. Sat there an image of stone or wood. That silence has become unendurable to these others, and to me.

*(There is a pause. THE QUEEN neither speaks nor moves. FIRST ATTENDANT strikes the drum three times.)*

THE KING. Captain of the Guard!

FIRST ATTENDANT. *(Speaking as Captain of the Guard, without turning his head)* King, I am here.

THE KING. Someone has struck three times upon the great door. Admit him!

FIRST ATTENDANT. *(Speaking as before.)* I will admit him.

*(THE STROLLER enters.)*

THE KING. What is your name?

STROLLER. It is enough that I am a stroller and a fool, and that you are the King of the Great Clock Tower.

THE KING. I am that King. What do you want?

STROLLER. A year ago somebody told me that you had married the most beautiful woman in the world, and from that moment I have had her image in my head, and month by month, it has grown more and more beautiful. I have made poems about her and sung them everywhere, but I have never seen her.

THE KING. Have you no wife or sweetheart of your own?

STROLLER. I had a wife, but she was so much uglier than the image in my head, that I left her. The other night I was eating my dinner in a tavern: I am a man of no account, and so must eat my meals amongst servants and boors; a man there said I was a fool, because I was in love with a woman I had never seen.

THE KING. But what have I to do with it?

STROLLER. I do not want to be called a fool. Send for the Queen that I may look at her.

## W. B. Yeats

THE KING. You seem to me a brazen, audacious man, not caring where you stand, nor of whom, nor to whom you speak.

STROLLER. I have never shown disrespect to the image in my head, yet I must see the woman herself.

THE KING. She is at my side.

STROLLER. Is this the Queen of the Great Clock Tower?

THE KING. She is that Queen.

(THE STROLLER *stands in front of* THE QUEEN )

STROLLER. She is not so tall as I had thought, not so white and red, but what does it matter? I shall proclaim everywhere that she is the most beautiful woman in the world.

THE KING. Then go! You have seen her.

STROLLER. Not yet. I was a little drunk that night when they mocked me, and I swore that not only would I see the Queen, but that—O, I must have been very drunk—that she would dance for me.

THE KING. What!

STROLLER. When she has danced, I shall be grateful, and I shall sing.

THE KING. I shall have you flogged.

STROLLER. Then you will flog a sacred man.

THE KING. How! A sacred man?

STROLLER. I will tell you a great secret. I went to the Boyne where the old Gods live. I lay there for a month eating nothing. Then I saw Aengus and all the Gods. I told them of my oath, and all the Gods shouted. After that there was silence and then Aengus spoke ; and listen well, for these were his very words:—

‘Upon the last night of the year, when the Great Clock strikes the last note of midnight, the Queen shall kiss you upon the mouth.’

THE KING. Captain of the Guard!

FIRST ATTENDANT. (*Speaking as Captain and as before.*) I am here!

THE KING. I give this man to you. He has said that the Queen will kiss him upon the mouth at the last stroke of the clock. Take him therefore and strike his head from his body.

FIRST ATTENDANT. (*Speaking as Captain of the Guard.*) I will strike his head from his body.

STROLLER. I go, but this is what will happen. First (*Counting on his fingers.*) the Queen will dance; second, I shall sing——

# The King of the Great Clock Tower

THE KING. What, with your head off?

STROLLER. When I am grateful, I sing. The Queen, being grateful, will give me a kiss.

*(He goes right.)*

THE KING. Stop! You have told us nothing but lies.

THE KING. *(To Queen.)* Speak! Who is this man? Perhaps if you will answer my questions, I shall spare his life.

*(THE QUEEN remains silent and immovable )*

THE KING. So be it. Whether his tale be true or not, it is plain that he wishes to sacrifice his life, to lay it down at your feet. Take him, Captain of the Guard.

FIRST ATTENDANT. *(Speaking as Captain of the Guard)* I take him

*(THE KING thrusts THE STROLLER out to right.)*

THE KING. Bring me his head that I may know that he is dead. *(He now stands looking off stage.)* If he was not your lover before you came into this country. If he is nothing to you, if he is nothing but a stroller and fool, if he is nothing but a man who has insulted you, laugh or sing, I do not care which it is.

*(THE QUEEN moves for the first time. Turning her head slowly and looking at THE KING.)*

THE KING. Why do you fix your eyes upon me?

SECOND ATTENDANT. *(Singing as Queen in a low voice.)*

O what may come  
Into my womb!

THE KING. Ah, that is better. But sing out loud that all here may know that you rejoice in his death.

*(THE QUEEN rises.)*

SECOND ATTENDANT. *(Singing as Queen )*

He longs to kill  
My body, until  
That sudden shudder  
And limbs lie still.

O, what may come  
Into my womb,  
What caterpillar  
My beauty consume!

THE KING. I do not know what those words mean, but they sound scornful.

*(THE KING goes out right and returns with the head of THE STROLLER, and lays it upon the cubical throne to right, nearest audience.)*

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THE KING. Now I shall know if those lips can sing. (*He sits on the other cubical throne to right.*) You have our attention. Sing, Stroller and fool.

(*THE QUEEN begins to dance.*)

THE KING. That is a good thought. Dance! Turn him into mockery with a dance. O, a good thought. (*He laughs* THE QUEEN *lays head on the ground at the centre of the stage; stands motionless looking at the head.*) Dance! Dance! If you are nothing to him but an image, a body in his head, he is nothing to you but a head without a body. What is the good of a lover without a body? Dance! He thought you were not so fine as the image in his head, nor so tall, nor so red, nor so white. Dance! Display your beauty!

(*THE QUEEN dances. Then stands in the centre of the stage, facing audience, the head upon her shoulder.*)

THE KING. The lips are opening. The eyes are moving.

FIRST ATTENDANT. (*Singing as head in a low voice*)

Images ride, I heard a man say——

THE KING. O, terror, it has begun to sing!

(*He cowers down, covering his face*)

FIRST ATTENDANT. (*Singing as head.*)

Images ride, I heard a man say,  
Out of Benbulbin and Knocknareagh,  
*What says the Clock in the Great Clock Tower?*  
Out of the grave. Saddle and ride  
But turn from Rosses' crawling tide,  
The meet's upon the mountain side.  
*A slow low note and an iron bell.*

What made them mount and what made them come,  
Cuchulain that fought night long with the foam;  
*What says the Clock in the Great Clock Tower?*  
Niam that rode on it; lad and lass  
That sat so still and played at the chess—  
What but heroic wantonness.  
*A slow low note and an iron bell.*

Aleel, his Countess; Hanrahan  
That seemed but a wild wenching man;  
*What says the Clock in the Great Clock Tower?*  
And all alone comes riding there  
The King that could make his people stare,  
Because he had feathers instead of hair.  
*A slow low note and an iron bell.*

(*When the song has finished, the dance begins again, the clock strikes. The strokes are represented by a gong struck off stage. THE QUEEN dances to the sound of the gong,*

# The King of the Great Clock Tower

*and at the last stroke presses her lips to the lips of the head. THE KING has risen and drawn his sword. THE QUEEN lays the head upon her breast, and fixes her eyes upon him. He appears about to strike, but kneels, laying the sword at her feet. The TWO ATTENDANTS rise singing, and slowly close the inner curtain. Their song is as follows:—)*

FIRST ATTENDANT. O, but I saw a solemn sight;  
*Said the rambling, shambling travelling-man;*  
Castle Dargan's ruin all lit,  
Lovely ladies dancing in it.

SECOND ATTENDANT. What though they danced; those days are gone;  
*Said the wicked, crooked, hawthorn tree;*  
Lovely lady or gallant man  
Are blown cold dust or a bit of bone.

FIRST ATTENDANT. O, what is life but a mouthful of air;  
*Said the rambling, shambling, travelling-man;*  
Yet all the lovely things that were  
Live, for I saw them dancing there.

*(THE QUEEN has come down stage and now stands framed in the half-closed curtains )*

SECOND ATTENDANT. Nobody knows what may befall;  
*Said the wicked, crooked, hawthorn tree.*  
I have stopped so long a gap in the wall  
May be I shall not die at all.

*(The inner curtain is closed; the TWO ATTENDANTS stand upon either side singing.)*

SECOND ATTENDANT. Why must those holy, haughty feet descend  
From emblematic niches and what hand  
Ran such a delicate raddle through their white?  
My heart is broken, yet must understand.

FIRST ATTENDANT. For desecration and the lover's night.

SECOND ATTENDANT. I cannot face that emblem of the moon.  
Nor eyelids that the unmixed heavens dart,  
Nor stand upon my feet, so great a fright  
Descends upon my savage, sunlit heart.  
What can she lack whose emblem is the moon?

FIRST ATTENDANT. But desecration and the lover's night.

SECOND ATTENDANT. Delight my heart with sound; speak yet again;  
But look and look with understanding eyes  
Upon the pitchers that they carry; tight  
Therein all time's completed treasure is:  
What do they lack? O cry it out again.

FIRST ATTENDANT. Their desecration and the lover's night.

*(The stage curtain descends.)*



# Prose, Old and New

By G. M. Young

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Two things struck me particularly in reading Mr. Dobree's *Modern Prose Style*.<sup>1</sup> One is the great variety of manners which a contemporary critic has to consider: by a critic I mean anyone who reads with appreciation of form. The other is the inadequacy of our critical vocabulary to record small differences. Mr. Dobree, for instance, is contrasting the styles of Mr. Manning and Mr. Moore: the comparison is carefully thought out and well sustained. Then in a despairing footnote Mr. Dobree adds, 'I know all this is subjective: but what is one to do?' I fancy a Greek would have known what to do. Starting with a few technical terms borrowed from music and poetry, Greek criticism built up a large scholastic vocabulary of frozen metaphors with which to register such distinctions as baffle Mr. Dobree. It is often difficult to see exactly what a particular term means; but in the hands of Dionysius and Longinus they are manifestly being used with a scientific precision which our own critical language very rarely approaches. That the last word is with the subjective, with the disciplined sensibility of the reader or hearer, the ancients knew as well as we, and much better than the Renaissance or the Augustans. But it was the last word: and it was not per-

mitted to interrupt the preliminary process of analysis and report.

I do not know if Mr. Dobree has grounded his studies on the ancient critics, or whether it is only identity of approach that has produced identity of observation. From first to last he is concerned with voice, with the form and quality of the sentence or paragraph as an utterance, delivered by the speaker and received by the hearer. To the ancients this was natural, because they still thought of prose and poetry as essentially things spoken, or read aloud. To us, who have lived for generations under the written word, it is not easy to understand, still less to incorporate in our own ideas, the Greek insistence on Delivery and to believe that the Forum really did break into roars of applause because a speaker closed a paragraph with

*filii comprobavit.*

It was not until I had heard Russian spoken that I realized, in the strong cadences and steep modulations, with the long inflexions forming a musical accompaniment to the meaning, what ancient delivery must have been like.

To transpose ancient critical ideas into our own idiom we have therefore to posit a kind of imaginary voice. Mr. Dobree quotes a sentence from *The Times* :—

'As soon as it was announced, on the morrow of Parliament's rising,'

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Prose Style*, by Bonamy Dobree. Clarendon Press, 6s.

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and asks, 'Who would dream of *saying* "on the morrow of Parliament's rising"?' Shortly afterwards, of a journalist who produced 'No sound comes from out those walls,' he asks, 'Does the man habitually say "from out"?' If he is a local preacher, he probably does, in his emotive hour. One can hear him saying it. But there is a difference between the two which, I think, a Greek would have noticed and could have named. *Parliament's rising* is a solecism: it is not a turn of speech employed by anyone who is in the habit of hearing good English spoken; *from out those walls* is a frigidity of the class, misuse of poetic phrasing to give elevation. The Greek would not, however, have condemned it on Mr. Dobree's grounds. He would have said rather, 'Of course, you must not use *from out* when you are talking about a police station: you might use it, though, if you were speaking of the prisons of the Inquisition, and it was in keeping with the general tone of the passage. But your question: do we *say* this? reminds me rather of the lawyer's trick when the propriety of a novel is in question: Tell me, is this the sort of book you would put in a Young Girl's hands? The answer, of course, is that there are other readers in the world besides Young Girls; and Nature, who has furnished lovers with diminutives and fish-wives with expletives, has given all of us many voices, and rhythms and diction suitable to many occasions. When you ask me what is the difference, for example, between

Embryon truths, and verities yet in their chaos:

and

truth in the old fashioned, absolute sense of the term:

I think I can tell you. Large and rare words give fullness to style: simple and ordinary words give ease: the slow and resonant

*embr* and *ontr*

contrasted with the quick, light

*abs* and *utes*,

correspond in each case with the diction. You say, what indeed I can see for myself, that the second passage is nearer to the language of ordinary life. But your assertion that authors are now impelled "to try to write as they speak in ordinary life on ordinary physical matters" makes me somewhat anxious for the future of your literature. When indeed you suggest that there is in this a certain fidelity and honesty, as if it were a virtue to pretend that no one had ever written before, I discern the foundations of your national greatness. Solon, Solon, you English are always Sunday-school children, and your own zeal to extirpate the "literary" from literature suggests the Sunday-school monitor on the track of furtive pear-drops.'

## II

To the Greek we might reply that the 'literary' made a pretty bad mess of his literature, and that while his doctrine of the Many Voices is undoubtedly sound, in practice he went wrong, and led a multitude after him, by using his Public Voice where it was not wanted, making History, for

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example, and even Geography, dance to the tune of Declamation. For in the end the Voices are reducible to two, that in which we 'debate and assert,' and the other in which we 'whisper conclusions to one another': the polemical, expository, forensic, homiletic; and the dialectic. Here again the Greek was ready with his standard models: Thucydides of the High Harmony, Lysias of the Low, Plato and Demosthenes rising and falling from a Middle Harmony between the two. And here, it seems to me, rather than in the contrast between the spoken and written word, is the clue to the history of English prose since the Restoration. Farther back we need hardly go. The men of Charles II.'s time were the first English generation to think of themselves as Modern: they needed a prose to match, and they devised an instrument which really did satisfy Mr. Dobree's ideal: 'ordinary speech on ordinary physical matters.' We might call it Royal Society prose, because the Royal Society's injunction to contributors was plainly meant to be read – don't write like Sir Thomas Browne. Out of it came the Low or Middle Harmony of Dryden, Addison, Swift and Berkeley.

Prose of this kind is unquestionably difficult to write. It will therefore be, by most authors, written badly. The dangers ahead are many: false simplicity, formless ease, aridity, meanness, vulgarity. To keep it going needs an athletic tension of the individual mind, and strong critical discipline from society. Our Attic phase ended in Grub Street, and there were no Salons, and no good Social Comedy, to keep the tradition moving

forward. Swift, who saw the mischief coming, called for an Academy. Whether in that mode or some other, the need was for form: the desire, no doubt also, was for something more resonantly and visibly fine than the Attic manner provided. It is not easy to write like Dryden because it is not easy to see how, otherwise than other men, Dryden writes. But anyone can learn to say,

'He was an envoy without dexterity and a plenipotentiary without address.'

It is true, I believe, that Greek, as used by Greeks, not by the conglomerate population of the Eastern Mediterranean, never quite loses its colloquial tone. Latin is for public performance: at its naughtiest, even, it has a certain liturgical dignity, and the freedmen in Petronius, though they get their idioms wrong, can turn a sentence as well as Petronius himself. Structurally our own language, as spoken, is nearer to Greek;<sup>1</sup> it sits loose to syntax, and declines to recognize the Laws of Grammar as anything more than statistical averages. But our vocabulary for public purposes is mainly Latin, and Latin words, simply by their greater length, impose a definite rhythm on our speech, and a delivery akin to that of the parent tongue. To take the first example that occurs,

'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it,'

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Irish is still closer. Someone ought to try the experiment of translating Aristophanes into Anglo-Irish prose.

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seems to me to require the Greek, or private, voice:

‘That her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,’

the public, or Roman, voice. Thus the contrast between the written and the spoken word does not seem to me to be quite so fundamental as Mr. Dobree supposes. I do not, for instance, feel the great passages of Johnson—

‘Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy,’

or

‘Of Gilbert Walmsley thus presented to my mind’—

as being translations from a spoken to a written idiom. It was as natural for Burke in one mood to *say*

‘the contortions of the Sibyl without her inspiration’:

as, in another, to *write*,

‘As I came through Uxbridge, I found that, at the last market day, barley was at forty shillings a quarter: oats there were literally none: and the innkeeper was obliged to send for them to London. I forgot to ask about pease.’

Really there is no reason to think, as Mr. Dobree suggests, that Johnson ‘recoiled with horror’ from the vulgarity of ‘it has not wit enough to keep it sweet.’ Most of his conversation, and much of the *Lives of the Poets*, is in that manner: and he evidently enjoyed the humour of interlacing the two styles. ‘The woman has

a bottom of good sense I say the woman is fundamentally sensible.’ ‘Henceforth let no man suffer his felicity to depend upon the death of his aunt.’ The Nineteenth Century in the person of Leslie Stephen pronounced that sentence to be pompous and absurd, and for the Nineteenth Century there was this excuse. It was tone-deafened by the output of debased Augustan English in the early days of the steam-press: the English of auctioneers and uneducated journalists, of advertisers and canvassers: the most degraded idiom known to our literary history, the English of the *Serious Door*, the *Extensive Aggregation of Similar Lucubrations*, and the *Inescapable and Major Issue of Redundancy*: the English in which guidebooks are unable

‘to enjoy the accommodations of the Norfolk Hotel without being reminded of an occurrence indicative of the importance of beauty and accomplishments never being separated from virtue’;

and in which

‘the object of this arrangement is to limit to two floors the height to which it is necessary to ascend in order to reach the front door.’

It is still with us: of these pearls, one was secreted by a Committee on Herings in 1934, another by the London County Council in 1933.

The voice of Johnson was the voice of Rome calling the *Græculi* to order: it bore much the same relation to the delivery of his successors as the deportment of Pitt to the deportment of Mr. Turveydrop. But the

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Attic tradition was running clear and fresh all the while: in Gray's letters, for instance, in Goldsmith, in Cowper, in Miss Austen, in Hazlitt. An Attic revival was due, and in time it came, with Thackeray and Frederick Rogers, Lord Blachford, who taught Fleet Street to write the English he had learnt from Newman. But, in the meantime, so much had happened that the pendulum, which had swung from Greece to Rome, was, instead of swinging from Rome back to Greece, set spinning. Sensibility had come in, and Romance: the water-colourists, as Hazlitt observed, had called into existence a new world of observation for prose to register. It was an age of confusion: and how many elements were warring in that chaos we might reckon by considering how many strands went to the making of Bulwer's prose.

I am speaking now of that pause which followed on the death of Byron and closed with the appearance of the Victorians, and it is about here, I think, that we first become aware of the ascendancy of the printed word. We needed a Dryden or a Johnson to set a form upon this indigest. Unluckily, the most effective prose writers of the 'thirties, Bulwer himself, Dickens, Macaulay and Carlyle, were anything but good models. Yet three of them were very great prose writers, and reading through Mr. Dobree's selections from contemporaries, I was often struck by resemblances, analogies if not echoes, which emphasized the remarkable modernity of Dickens' prose. We must think away the Fantastic belonging to his decade, and the showman's patter belonging to

himself; and then – to what age does a sentence like this belong?

'If the day were bright, you observed upon the housetops, stretching far away, a long dark path: the shadow of the Monument: and, turning round, the tall original was close beside you, with every hair erect upon his golden head.'

In the originality of the observation, and the ease, directness, and above all the unassuming confidence with which it is imparted, we have, it seems to me, the elements which Mr. Dobree desiderates and finds in the best prose writing of to-day.

To think of Dickens is to think of Ruskin. They are the two great masters of the Victorian art of verbal description: so great that, at its best, their descriptive prose attains an illusionist quality: to recall a passage is almost the equivalent of recalling a scene actually observed. And here Mr. Dobree's selections suggest an unexpected ratio. Spring in London from *The Man who Lost Himself* is done in the Dickens manner of successive, discrete registration: the Water Tapestry from the *Visit of the Gypsies* continues Ruskin's method of continuous revelation. One could be matched against the Fog exordium of *Bleak House*: the other against the Journey from Mestre in the *Stones of Venice*. Mr. Hughes, in *High Wind in Jamaica*, goes back to Dickens: Mr. Roger Fry, in *Sampler from Castile*, to Ruskin. Is it possible that our Modern Prose is not quite so modern as it thinks? Let us look.

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After quoting the passage:<sup>1</sup>

'Now great rolling uplands of enormous sweep, now boundless grassy plains: there is all the grandeur of monotony and yet continual change. Sometimes the distances are broken by the blue buttes or natural bluffs. Over all there is a sparkling atmosphere and never-failing breeze: the air is bracing even when most hot, the sky is cloudless and no rain falls. To those who love the sea, there is here a double charm. Not only is the roll of the prairie as grand as that of the Atlantic, but the crispness of the wind, the absence of trees, the multitude of tiny blooms upon the sod, all conspire to give a feeling of nearness to the ocean, the effect of which is that we are always expecting to hail it from the top of the next hillock.

'The colour of the landscape is, in summer, green and flowers; in fall time, yellow and flowers, but flowers ever,'

the critic proceeds to analyse it thus:

'the traveller does not call in the aid of poetical comparisons (the only comparison indulged in is the obvious one of the Atlantic) and the effect of the description on the mind is due to the extreme care with which the writer has put together in a short space the special and peculiar characteristics of the scenery, not forgetting to tell us everything that we of ourselves would naturally fail to imagine. The greatest difficulties that he has to contend against

are the ignorance and previous misconceptions of his readers. He must give information without appearing didactic, and correct what he foresees as probable false conceptions, without ostentatiously pretending to know better. His language must be as concise as possible or important sentences will be skipped, and yet at the same time it must flow easily enough to be pleasantly readable.'

Surely here the original passage would satisfy in principle Mr. Dobree's conception of the modern way of writing: its quietness and fidelity, expressing the movement of the mind in the rhythm of ordinary speech. But it was written in 1866, and Hamerton's criticism, written a few years later, shows an attitude to prose-writing which is almost exactly the attitude of Mr. Dobree himself. This kind of prose was widely diffused in the mid-Victorian time: out of the riot and uproar of the 'thirties there emerged a cool and lucid idiom; very much as the confusion of early Victorian manners, the jostling of the pompous, the truculent and the gushing, subsided into the 'informal serviceableness' which was the expected bearing of the late-Victorian gentleman.

This prose was in the main, I think, the creation of Oxford, and ultimately perhaps it could be traced to the Common room of Oriel.

'And it is here that the spirit of our age imposes itself on us. All the previous ages whose writers have been quoted or referred to here, had something they could take for granted, and it never occurred to the older writers that they could

<sup>1</sup> From *Greater Britain*, by Sir Charles Dilke

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not take themselves for granted. We can be sure of nothing: our civilization is threatened, even the simplest things we live by: we are on the verge of amazing changes. In our present confusion our only hope is to be scrupulously honest with ourselves, so honest as to doubt our own minds and the conclusions they arrive at. Most of us have ceased to believe, except provisionally, in truths, and we feel that what is important is not so much truth as the way our minds move towards truths. Perhaps that is why we nowadays instinctively mistrust anyone who pontificates: and as a matter of experience if we examine the writings of the pontificators, people skilled in a "way of saying things", we invariably find that their style is bad, that falsity has crept in somewhere. The writer is not being faithful to the movement of his mind: he is taking things for granted, and he fills us to-day with uneasiness.'

That is admirable prose: one might say, what one cannot say of many of Mr. Dobree's extracts, that it is beautiful prose. But will anyone say without book whether it is the prose of Mr. Dobree or Newman?

### III

This Victorian Attic was wanting in three directions: it was not loud enough for public presentation, not obtrusive enough for private display, it lacked the *susurrus magicus* of Browne or De Quincey. It shrank, as all

Attic prose does, from the blatant, the far-fetched, the *cantabile*: therefore, by a kind of Hegelian necessity, it produced the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Yellow Book*, and Walter Pater; agonies of urgent supplication, sudden poppies, and the ivy on the firm flesh of the young god's forehead. Much of it seems very dreadful now, but we had to have it and we have lived through it. So far, well. But it left behind it something that is not so well, which might get exaggerated into a Puritan aversion from the joy of self-expression, or an Anabaptist revolt from the common morality of literature: into an alternation of witch-hunts and orgies. Mr. Dobree watches his flock with pastoral anxiety. 'It is written apparently in the *tones* of every day, though here and there we can detect traces of literary forms – "only that which" instead of "only what": "how to act" instead of "what to do": it is extraordinarily difficult to rid one's self of turns of that kind.' He is somewhat kinder when they rid themselves of grammar altogether and start 'experimenting'. But does Mr. Dobree suggest that *what* and *that which*, *how to act* and *what to do* are interchangeable terms, like *would* and *should*, perhaps? Must we all write – and talk – a kind of Basic Slag English, and abjure all buns from which the currants have not been extracted?

I have dwelt on the point because it seems to me that there is a real danger in the cult of under-writing, under the pretext of fidelity, honesty, or what not. It is the old question of the voice again. 'One would like to think that all of us will come to the stage of refusing to write what we

## Prose, Old and New

### IV

would not, indeed, could not, say.' But I must ask: say when, where, to whom and what about? 'We must be able to imagine that he is talking to himself. In no other way can he achieve *a* style, which is the sound of his voice, which is the man himself.'<sup>1</sup> Yes, again: but talking to himself while he is thinking or after he has thought it all out? Mr. Dobree means the second, I know. He means what Buffon meant: the 'three fundamental disciplines', which Mr. Dobree inculcates, are those to which Buffon subjected himself rigorously ten hours a day for forty years. And the next generation found him intolerably 'literary'. He had achieved *a* style: it was the sound of his voice, which was Buffon himself. But it was not a voice which anyone wanted to hear. What they did want was Chateaubriand, who never composed a sentence in his mind, and admitted that he could only think when he had a pen in his hand. It is an ominous analogy. Perhaps, as Mr. Dobree thinks, our prose will take the direction of 'greater flexibility and a more curious following of our mental processes'. I wonder. Is it not just possible that the next decade will be so tired of hearing Mr. Brewer, Mr. Stewer, Mr. Whiddon, Mr. Davy, Mr. Gurney, Mrs. Henry Hawk and Miss Thomasine Coble, all following the movement of their own minds aloud, that the call will be heard again for fullness, resonance, and authority?

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dobree should have warned him that, if he does, he will be followed through the streets of Cambridge with shouts of Fake! Drive! Silly! The addressees of these endearments are Lamb, Stevenson and Sir Arthur Eddington. See *Discriminations*, *passim*.

Cicero, who knew more about prose than most of us, had his troubles with the under-writers too. 'I know,' he says, 'that Demosthenes can always lower himself to the level of his theme. But can Lysias always rise to the height of his? When you ask me to use my private, intimate manner for all purposes and on all occasions, I must answer that you are contracting prose to your own capacity, and I would have it as free as the nature of the subject requires.' Again, he was thinking primarily of the spoken word, and while he would have understood and agreed with Mr. Dobree's insistence on the vocal quality of prose, he would have been puzzled by 'the ordinary voice'. 'Naturally,' he would say, 'no citizen, no man of liberal intelligence, speaks in an extraordinary voice, any more than he uses extraordinary words or walks in an extraordinary way. But by extraordinary we mean not suited to the occasion. Do you only use your voices now in private conversation?' And we should have to explain that so it is.

Mr. Dobree touches on the question whether the English voice was more highly modulated, more strongly cadenced, in the Seventeenth Century than now. I do not think he has taken quite the right point. My recollection assures me that the private voice of men who were growing up between 1820 and 1840 was very much like our own. But when they read aloud, quoted Latin verses, or recited some favourite passage of contemporary oratory, the Dormant Thunder of Canning, Disraeli's Extinct Volcanoes



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or Bright's Angel of Death, this voice at once assumed a resonance and variety which would in 1934 seem intolerably histrionic. But it was to them perfectly natural: the last man I heard using it in public – in a modified form, it is true, but quite noticeably – was Lord Chaplin, and if he had been required to constrain his voice to a conversational monotone, I doubt if he could have spoken at all. Whether there was, through mediæval schools and liturgical Latin, any real affiliation with Roman speech, I do not know. But the general effect, the muffled resonance with which the sentence was delivered, must I think have been very like the Latin *mugitus*.

This voice has ceased to sound. But so long as it was there, always moving towards utterance when the subject required it, it naturally generated the diction and manner which Mr. Dobree ascribes to late-Victorian prose. I have already quoted Mr. Dobree's sentences. 'We can be sure of nothing . . . we are on the verge of amazing changes . . . we feel that what is important is not so much truth as the way our minds move towards truths.' There is nothing new in that. Sir Frederick Pollock was saying it in 1880, Kingsley in 1864. But they were saying it out loud: Sir Frederick (in his *Spinoza*) in the coloured, cadenced style, a sort of Augustan Romantic, learnt from Macaulay: Kingsley (in *Madam How and Lady Why*) in the rather distressing fantastic-facetious of the Christian Socialist lecturer (it is all over Hughes, for example, and is, I suppose, a by-birth of Carlyle and the

Germans). Indeed, one might follow the sentiment still farther back. Miss Martineau (in the *Illustrations of Political Economy*) gives voice to it in the intense and gritty diction in which Philosophic Radicals wrote Blue Books, from which descends the flat and accurate prose of our Government Departments.

An undergraduate, attending a lecture somewhat above his capacity, recorded in his notebook that there is a sisterly and disasterly in human affairs. There is, all the same. The Victorians apprehended it, rightly, as an alternation of analysis and synthesis, a movement from one provisional system to another, a dialectic with stopping-places of orthodoxy. We have rather lost sight of the orthodoxy and the synthesis. But they are on the way. A clerisy to which unemployment is unknown is probably inclined to linger on the orthodoxy it has reached, especially if it feels itself to be a weighty element in the State: it will tend therefore to speak in the public, authoritative manner of the insider addressing the outsider, the qualified telling the unqualified: in Mr. Dobree's happy phrase, to present rather than to communicate. As it ceases to count, it will use its private voice more and more, if it is in earnest: or take to shouting because no one stops to listen. So we get in the ancient world the quiet, unwritten prose of the philosophic sects, and the violently over-written, acrobatic prose of the Asians, of whom a Roman said that they had to use the wrong words because they didn't know the right ones – a criticism which seems to me

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to be most widely and alarmingly applicable to-day. In both we see an aversion from the pure and central tradition of freedom, 'as wide as the nature of the subject requires,' and though the stylistic troubles of the ancients are not ours, I think the analogy is worth considering. An exaggerated fear of 'literature' on the one side, and an undisciplined indulgence in the 'experimental' on the

other, though they could not create a tradition, might easily destroy one, and prose is the one art to which, in the nature of things, tradition is essential. It is the medium of communication between the ages, and a failure of tradition would reduce us to the state of those savages whose language changes so fast that the old people cannot make out what the young people are saying.

### OVERHEARD

IN case the reader decides to embark on *Ulysses*, he should be warned that some of Mr. Joyce's paragraphs extend anywhere from twenty to thirty pages in length and several sentences are so long that their source has never been discovered by a white man. Therefore he should equip himself with plenty of warm clothing, a hatchet, first-aid kit (in case he should trip over any of the longer words), and sufficient food to last him several weeks.

Upon entering a sentence the experienced reader will take the precaution of blazing every few words with his axe, so that in an emergency he can find his way back. It is also wise to sight some familiar object, such as a Chapter Heading, and to guide on this. In case the reader is without compass, moreover, he may determine the general direction in which the book is going by noting the shadow of a match on the face of his watch at noon,

or else by observing the moss which usually grows on the north side of Joyce's words. The end of the book may be determined by the back cover.

Let us say that the reader has penetrated to the centre of a dense paragraph and is forced to stay there for the night. Above all, he must not lose his head. His first task is to kindle a small fire, which may be accomplished without matches by rubbing two words together. Feed this spark with dead wood, which can be broken off from any of the surrounding sentences, and bank the fire for the night with some rich dirt which is to be found everywhere in great abundance. If a shelter is desired, the reader should seek out the nearest innuendo, and crawl deep down into its inner meaning, where he will be comfortable and, according to Judge Woolsey, safe from harm.—J. RIDDELL (*Vanity Fair*).

# Wisdom Garnered by Day

by Robert McAlmon

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BENNIE ran from the kitchen, having chucked several cookies in his pocket. If his Cousin Bessie saw him she said nothing as usual, for he well knew she still viewed him as a visitor and also as a little boy to be pampered, for, goodness knows, he had heard her declare, Uncle John could be severe and disciplinary enough for the entire clan. In the orchard he stopped to pick up several huge yellow apples, for Abie and Naps. The apples no longer looked bigger than pumpkins to his eyes as they had on the day of his arrival. By now they and all of Uncle's farming possessions had become very usual to him, and the apples, of which he had at first eaten too many, tasted flat and were not very juicy. The Greens still liked them though.

Abraham and Napoleon were fun to play with even if they were nigger kids, and there wasn't anybody else his age, and all of the older boys were doing farm work. Besides, Abie and Naps didn't try to hog the whole show like Felix and cousin Harry. They even let Bennie do most of the suggesting of what to do, except that they knew more about country life and what places were fun to visit than did he. As he ran across the cow pasture he eyed askance Abraham, the ancient bull. Cousin Bessie had named him

that because he was the patriarchal father of so many and tyrannized his flock mercilessly, she claimed, and Bennie reflected how much he had learned in three weeks on the farm, and mainly from Abie and Naps. The others never told him anything much, or they didn't tell the truth or they told him fairy stories. He would still believe that fib of Cousin Bessie's about Father Abraham looking for higher land if it hadn't been for Abie's enlightening explanation about how very tiny calves indeed grow up inside their mammas until they are big enough to get borned.

Abie and Naps were sitting outside their mammy's kitchen, both of their faces sticky from corn-hone and syrup, or black-jack 'lasses, of which Bennie immediately had some, for Mammy Green never worried about ruining a boy's appetite for his meals because of gorging done between times. She was waddling, black, fat, and glistening, about her makeshift kitchen, but from that shack emerged very wonderful food at times, if Pap Marston had bothered to work to earn a few dollars for food supplies. In any case Mammy Green managed to do washings or to get gifts from the members of the white community about, and she and Pap Marston did together manage always

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to have a few chickens about the yard, and there were several razor-back hogs grunting and rooting about piles of refuse, lazily because of the heat.

When Bennie had asked Cousin Bessie why Pap Marston's name wasn't the same as Mammy Green's and Abie's and Naps' he didn't get the answer he wanted. Instead Cousin Bessie explained that Pap Marston was quite old, having been a slave who had escaped from the South years ago. Mammy Green, it appeared, had been married to Mr. Green long ago and he might return some day, but now nobody knew where he was and nobody looked peaked with worry about the matter.

A mother sow lay in the dust not far off and her litter of six dozed or nozzled at her udders. She grunted with complaining content and submitted herself to her youngsters even when they prevented her from oozing herself as deeply into the dust as she wished. Generally the litter snoozed in the heat and dust as it was mid-afternoon and sweltering. She was a horrible looking sow, Bennie thought, and did not quite believe that she was thin only because she was a razor back. Her babies were horrible looking too, and he thought of the fat pink-nosed porkers which Uncle John had in his clean, well-kept pig pens. 'They's a diffrent breed, dat's all. You cain't know how dem hogs eat and nebber get real fat but dey's well streaked with lean meat and dat's what's good eatin',' Naps explained, and added that there was another old sow who was going to drop young 'uns that afternoon. Upon this information Bennie, Naps and Abie went to

sit on the pigsty fence to watch proceedings, and Bennie learned a great deal more about the facts of animal nature. For well over an hour he was watching the sow become a parent of eight piglets. By that time he felt replete with information and rather disappointed and bored with the whole display, but it was a hot afternoon and he did not know what to suggest, although he did feel restless and wanted to get away from Mammy Green's shack. She was very easy-going, but she had the habit of telling stories to Aunt Mary and Bennie's mother days when she helped them with their cooking, canning of fruit or laundering. She laughed and thought Bennie 'jes' up to everything, so's Abie and Napoleon don't know wot he's going to ask or want to do next.' To Bennie's dismay, however, his mother did not always respond to Mammy Green's amused attitude. She became austere and gave him scoldings, or whippings, although she threatened the whippings more and gave them less than she had at home. She was being far less strict with him this summer, rather placidly agreeing with her sister that little harm could come to him in this quiet countryside.

Finally the three decided to go into the meadows which were knee-deep with clover and alfalfa, so that a cutting was sure to take place within a few days. There was an undercurrent humming and chanting of insect and bird life, and a variety of coloured butterflies, blue, yellow, orange, purple, with designs embroidered upon their frail wings and bodies, floated about in the clear pure atmosphere. Across from the meadows the

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wheat, barley, corn, and oat fields were beginning to turn golden, but their stalks still contained juices to make them resilient as they swayed in the breeze, the wheat field seemingly endless, stretching so far out that it was cut off only by the horizon. Abie and Naps spoke of future delights, if Bennie only dared. In the corn fields were the vines of watermelons and canteloupe, and within a week or so the melons would be ripe, and they might swipe them but they'd have to be very careful not to get caught. Bennie said that it was wicked to steal, but Abie and Naps didn't sense much conviction in his assertion, because they knew that he was like themselves, not at all deterred from doing something naughty if only there was a fair chance of not being detected by their elders, and Bennie wasn't afraid that Mammy Green or Paps Marston would tell about their taking a watermelon or so. He knew that joke about a nigger in the melon patch, and how a coloured man can't resist a chicken-coop. He felt very pleased about the Green outfit. They might be easy-going, shiftless, good-for-nothing, coons, like Cousin Dave said, but they were mighty easy to be about with.

Seated upon a bridge the three watched minnows and sizeable fish, suckers, shiners, bullheads, pass in the clear waters of the brook beneath them. At last they decided they could build up a dam a little way down where the stream narrowed, and this they proceeded to do, leaving a very small space through which the water could flow, and their hopes were realized. They did trap five fish, three suckers, one shiner, and a bullhead,

who stuck or horned Bennie when he clutched at it too carelessly. He knew that in such hot weather the fish were not very good eating, but had they been he wouldn't have dared bring them to his Aunt. Upon the thought he became aware that he had been wading up to his knees in the water, and his shoes and pants were soaked. There wasn't much chance his mother wouldn't notice that, but he comforted himself with the idea that he might slip through the kitchen and get on his overalls, go barefoot, and claim that he was going to help Uncle John and the others with the chores. He couldn't milk, but he could mix up the bran mash, and fork out hay to the horses.

Napoleon suddenly recalled that he knew where there was a hive of wild bees and he bet a million that it was chock full of honey. It was in the dead trunk of an old oak tree. 'No sah, I won't git stung,' he was positive, 'an' anyway, what's an old bee sting or two.'

Naps recklessness infected Bennie, and upon coming to the tree it appeared that most of the bees must be away, collecting pollen, they decided. They dug into the tree, and ran away. Soon they returned. 'Yas, sah, it is shuah full of honey. Dat white stuff, wid dem maggoty things crawling in it. Dem's young bees.'

Bennie looked most dubiously at what Naps said was honey. He had expected to come upon well-filled cones of waxen cells filled with a light gold substance, such as the honey he had eaten with pancakes, biscuits, corn hone, and cream. Abie explained that such honey was made by tame

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bees who kept house better than the wild ones, and also, it was men who made the wood frames and started the waxen cells which contained the tame honey. 'Dis year honey has got a sweeter taste. It's wild wid flavour like a wild duck has got more game taste dan a tame one.' Naps dug his finger into the white mass, removed the maggots, and ate the honey. He didn't get stung.

Bennie tried to copy his example, but he decidedly did not like the looks of the maggoty things in the so-called honey. He was dubious about the nigger boys' natural information, as he had been a few times before. Nevertheless, he tasted the mess, and then wiped the rest of it on the grass, or he started to, for immediately he was up running and yelling in pain and panic. The bees were stinging him all right, a whole swarm following after him. Abie and Naps, however, took off their shirts and helped shoo them away, and after a good run the bees were no longer following Bennie. 'You shuah shuddn't a stuck yer finger right in de honey where perhaps de queen bee is. You shud a done like me, a stuck yer finger where it was all honey and maggots and de bees not working dere no moah. Dat's all right. Jest wait. I'll fix you so's you won't know you's been stung.'

Abie calmly removed a plug of tobacco from his pocket and took a chaw, as did Naps. Bennie didn't want to try any new experiments at the moment and felt most sceptical about honey, bees, and the nigger boys' information. Nevertheless, he let Abie and Naps smear him with bits of

chewed tobacco and juice, and listened to their explanation that it would shuah draw out the bee-stings. In any case there the stings were and Bennie reflected that he might utilize them. When he returned home he would wail as in great pain and tell about having been stung by the bees, and possibly Cousin Bessie, Aunt Mary, or even mother, would pity his sufferings and forget to ask where he had been and what he had been up to all afternoon. Unfortunately the bee-stings did cease to pain and he had forgotten them by the time he did return home so that all of his planned guile came to naught.

The day was cooling, sweet and clean and clear, and the odours of clover, grains, and of the apple orchard at the end of the meadows, infiltrated the atmosphere. They went to sit on the empty stanchion where Father Abraham was kept during days when neighbours' cows came to visit him. Generally, however, during the summer months, he was at pasture with Uncle John's herd of cattle. Now the herd was down in the marshes, some of them knee deep in the mud and water, amongst the water lilies and water weeds, nibbling, or just standing, chewing their cuds. A cowy smell came from the herd, a smell admixed with that of marshes, cow manure, and alive cowhide. The three boys discussed odours; the odour of a cow stable when the cows are being milked and huge pails of white foaming milk are poured steamingly into separators. 'It's de bes' place to git warm in de winter time, I tell you,' Abie explained, and upon Bennie's questionings told of the winter in this section of Canada.

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Bennie couldn't believe him really, feeling and sensing the peaceful calm and gentleness of the air and scenery about now. Upon reflection, however, he recalled that it was so with the seasons back in Dakota. He had simply been too young to notice, and at home there was always the warm stove fires, warm overcoats, mittens, and a sleigh-ride to school. He was sure he wouldn't like to be here in the winter-time, because perhaps it would be as lonely and bleak as it was for poor Draguy Andorovitch in that creaky farmhouse eight miles from nowhere, and with his Polack papa and mamma so poor that they hadn't money for proper warm clothes and fuels, let alone to repair the leaks and cracks in the house.

As evening's vague and gentle twilight came on Bennie began to feel dimly nostalgic, what he knew by the word homesick. He rejected the emotion because he had learned that it was sissy-like to be homesick. He thought of Stephanie and Liz and Amalia, and even of Sam and Eugene in spite of the fact that they tried to older-brother and boss him and make him run their errands. He thought more of his playmate friends, however, and of being in a city rather than in the country, now that Abie's tales made him think of how lonely it would be here in the cold weather. Here if the snow was six feet deep he couldn't manage to get across the meadows to Abie and Naps, because they'd be snowed in and he'd have no one to play with. He was mighty glad that they weren't staying here till winter then.

Still a quiet mood came upon

him and it didn't seem to matter where he was or what he was doing. For the moment he was desireless, feeling that he never wanted to do anything but just sit in the air. Not eat, not sleep, not move, but just sit and have Abie and Naps tell him stories about life and ghosts – hants, they called them. He didn't believe their ghost stories by a long shot, but they gave him the shivers and indeed he did not intend to visit the haunted house any night, but he felt safe because he knew Abie and Naps wouldn't dare visit it either. They were just talking big now. He wasn't any more afraid of that haunted house or of the dark than they were, but suppose some bad man stayed there and was the ghost and you had to run, you might stumble in the dark. And bump your nose and get a nose-bleed and be caught out telling fibs by your mother.

It had come supper-time and Bennie did not want to be late and have his mother discover that he'd been playing with the nigger kids again. She might not let him run off by himself the next time, if she could help it. He promised Abie, who was eleven, that he would try and get brother Felix and Cousin Harry to take him to the evangelical meeting at the negro church that night, just to see if pure spirits did come to possess people, to cleanse and purify them, making black people as white as snow with purity, Abie swore. Naps who was only eight wasn't allowed to go to the meeting either, because Pap Marston didn't believe in dat kind ob religion, and also knew that Uncle John did not approve. Pap Marston believed in keeping in with Mistah

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Rossmere. Bennie suspected his mother would refuse to let him go, but it was religion and it was going to church, as he would tell her, but he was doubtful that his argument would win her over.

He got home to find the women busy in the kitchen and gratefully realized that they were too busy to bother about him. His shoes and pants had dried and he rubbed the shoes with a brush, washed his face, and looked as guiltless as possible. At supper the very cleanliness of his face and hands should have warned his parent that he had been disobedient, but evidently she was too tired by the heat of the day to bother.

No, indeed, his mother said after supper, she would not permit any seven-year-old boy to stay up all hours of the night listening to a group of coloured people going through their hysterical rites. She was very fond of many coloured people, found them faithful and loyal servants, good nurses and gentle and generous companions, but their ways were not many generations removed from the primitive and the jungle. He was too young to understand. Their way of looking up to God was right and just for them, but decidedly no, the question was ended. Off to bed Bennie was to take himself at once and no whimpering nonsense about his not being allowed the freedom of other children. Well she knew that she had often been censured for allowing her children entirely too much freedom, and a noisy wild crew of young Indians they were, as children, and not properly respectful towards their parents when they were older. Married and settled down some of them might improve, but as yet they

were all enough to make a nervous wreck of a woman who hadn't the constitution of a draft-horse.

Bennie was soon off to bed after a whispered conference with brother Felix, who was twelve and also keen upon going to the evangelical meeting. Bennie's mother came into his room above the woodshed to see that he was properly asleep, and he heard her say that this country air and plenty of exercise was doing the boy a world of good. He went to sleep at once these evenings.

When she was gone downstairs, as he knew by the clatter of her heels on the steps, he saw from his window that Felix and Harry had harnessed the horse and were waiting in the shadow of the old maple tree. Taking off his nightgown—for his mother might have turned back the covers—he crawled out the window, down the woodshed roof, and soon was off with Felix and Harry.

When they were a quarter of a mile from the negro church or shack they had to drive at a walk as so many buggies were ahead of and behind them. In one buggy was a coal-black woman with a white starched cape, and upon her head was a huge white-brimmed affair, not a hat. It was starched and protruded a foot into the heavens, while the lower portion fitted her brow and skull. Felix surmised that she was a nun of some kind. Harry explained that she was supposed to hold communion with spirits on a higher plane than most mortals. She was, other coloured people said, The Exalted Sistah. When they drove into the churchyard Bennie went near her, timidly as he



felt timid with a spirit of awe, afraid of what his mother would do if she found out he'd come to the meeting, and awe at the reverential atmosphere and mien of the various coloured people about. The Exalted Sistah seemed not of this world. Her manner was distant and a far-away look was in her eyes. She spoke in a low deep voice, somehow consoling, but also warning that she was not of the common people and not to be addressed trivially. She called all people 'brothah' or 'sistah', and towards the minister, who also was very black, her manner was that as of one equal to another. She called him 'youah reverend sah'. Her manner certainly awed Bennie, who wondered if she meant to keep ordinary people from addressing her.

Felix and Harry did not go into the church because now surrounded by coloured people they felt shy, as intruders, although they had been able to joke about their meetings earlier in the day when about with white people entirely. A few other white farmers and people from the near-by town stayed out in the ground about the church-shack also. They were all curious, and Bennie particularly was drawn to the entry door to listen, after the singing, chanting, praying, and preaching, had been going on for some time.

The very black minister was preaching, and at first his manner of delivery was not unlike that of white ministers Bennie had seen and heard. The coloured man, however, became more vehement, predicting brim and hellfire and pitchforks, at first, but finally his imagination flowered.

Bennie did not understand much that he said, as he spoke so often of 'De sin 'ob carnality' and 'De blighting searing ruination which come from de obsession which is dat ob most ob my congregation.'

Bennie had heard Billie Sunday and other evangelists preach, but finally the negro left them all in the shade with his oratory, or rather, as Bennie saw it, his delivery. Suddenly, after a passionate burst of preaching he asked for repenters to come to the altar and confess their sins, and there was a rush of some twenty coloured people down the sawdust aisle. Some of the women started screaming their sins and repentance. They beat their breasts, tore at their hair, and prayed to God, confessing many sins. They quieted down as though hypnotized when the preacher prayed, and when all of the congregation started singing hymns the air was electrified with fervour and rhythm and mellow shouting voices making a grand chorus of a hackneyed hymn.

Bennie was less afraid now, but he was feverish with curiosity. Still this singing was not unlike that he had heard in church as he was used to it. He crept into the church and sat down beside a huge black woman who looked a comfortable mammy to him. He sat near the back entrance, however, and saw that it was Eliza, who had done washings for his Aunt, who sat beside him. He was not afraid of her because always she had pampered him, giving him sugared candy and one day she had actually given him a penny. He looked at her timidly, expecting to be recognized, but she paid no attention to him. Her eyes

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were on the pulpit, and she appeared to have much more whites to her eyes than usual. A strained tense look was on her face, and Bennie began to be frightened, wishing that he had not sat beside her, that he had not come into the church.

Soon the minister got up and began his harangue again. His prayers builded up to a sonorous crescendo, a ringing timbre in their tones, as he pointed his impassioned finger down at the faces of those in the audience. One time he pointed directly at Bennie, unless it was at Mammy Eliza. Bennie felt too uneasy to move, but he wanted to get outside. The minister talked passionately now about the sins of man, and exhorted all people to 'git down on yoah knees and crawl like de low creatures you is, an' wid wailin' an' weepin' crawl to de Lawd befoah you is all smitten by de fires ob His wrath.'

How wicked everybody is and only God is good, Bennie was feeling – hopelessly – and there was holiness all about him. White fervour was a vapour in the air, pressing down upon all present. Suddenly as the preacher was shouting Bennie was terrified so that the blood halted frozen within him, and he could not move. Mammy Eliza had made a strange heavy breathing whistling sound as of agonized strangulation. He turned to see blood dripping from her lips which she had bitten with her gleaming white teeth. Her eyes rolled back and back, white into her head. Her bosom heaved mightily. She trembled all over, ash-coloured instead of gleaming ebony black. Her forehead was covered with drops of sweat. 'Ooooooh,

Lawd Jesus,' she moaned and shrieked, 'Ah'm heah, ah's youah's, ah's comin' to youah altah and throne. Git ready to receive me. I's comin' to youah blessed arms.'

It was as though a mighty unseen force lifted her high out of her seat. She crushed stumblingly past Bennie and swept blindly up the aisle down the sawdust trail to the pulpit box before which she threw herself in a long, stumbling, face-down swoop. Her hands tore at her powerful bosoms as though she would rend them from her breast. Her hands ran with mad animal hysteria through her black kinkey-wire hair that she had torn loose. She held it above her head, an exalted expression upon her face, and then bore the mass of it over her face as she bent back and forth, moaning, writhing, and screaming.

At first, for a century which was actually a moment, Bennie could not move. His heart had evaporated to a cold vapour of fright within him. At last he was able to slip off his chair and go quietly until near the door, through which he bolted with a rush.

'Ha, ha, ha, look at Bennie,' he heard as he got out into the yard amongst the white men and their horses and buggies. He saw vaguely that Harry and the older men were laughing at and teasing him. 'I tell you, Bennie, those nigger wenches are hot when they're getting religion, and when they're not too. You'd better look out that one doesn't take after converting you,' a hired man from Uncle John's farm said.

Bennie felt sick and dazed. He wondered if Eliza had been struck so that the devil was being driven out of

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her, she seemed so in agony with her writhings.

Felix came up to him and took his hand, saying, 'Come on, we'll go home. Don't let them tease you.' Bennie was not even surprised that Felix was gentle rather than teasing older-brother to him. Dimly he realized that Felix, too, was frightened. When Harry and the hired man started to joke at Bennie, Felix turned on them savagely. 'Oh, shut your gabs for a while. You can see how pale the kid is. You were scared yourself and you weren't sitting by that bedtick of a black woman. You didn't dare go in the church and Bennie did.'

None of them talked much while driving back to the farmhouse. Bennie's fear, indefinable to himself, rather a dumbfoundment of unknown forces in life than a sharp terror, was not so keen as it had been. He was now, instead, smouldering with resentment at Harry, the hired man, and all who had laughed at him. Their raucous vulgarity of mirth angered him and he wished he were big enough to strike at them as they laughed, not because of himself but because they laughed at what was so obviously and

passionately real to the coloured people.

He wanted to be back home in the city with his family, left alone to himself by them, let to play with his neighbouring playmates. Towards Felix he felt not unfriendly, comforted rather, but the presence of Felix's arm about his shoulder, protectively, bothered him. He felt cold emotionally about everybody, and smothered by the physical and wouldbe comforting contact. There were many questions he wanted answered, but he could not understand enough to ask them and knew surely that could he question he would not be answered. He didn't believe that older people could answer the questions in him themselves.

When he was back in bed he went almost immediately to sleep, it being a late hour for him and he was exhausted by the day's playing and emotion.

The next day he could not quickly enough get to the Greens to tell Abie and Naps that he had been to the evangelical meeting, but his report of the experience was a sceptical one, endeavouring to convince the coloured boys that he was not taken in by that sort of thing, not he.

# Three Poems

by Phœbe Ashburner

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## HUMMING-BIRDS AT THE ZOO

THE humming-birds  
In their glass-enclosed artificial  
Tropic ruled off  
From our northern air  
Thread their world  
With motion. Their wings are  
Transparent with vibrancy, weaving  
The texture of air  
Through their feathers that  
Their bodies may balance there  
In dragonfly brightness, either  
With or without a strand  
Of horizontal motion  
Caught into their vertical  
Pulsating.  
Each is a small throbbing ball  
Of life, sustained  
By the sharp axis  
Of the beak, concealing  
The tiny honey-piercing  
Lightning of the blue  
Tongue – beak the stalk  
Of the spherical flower  
Of bright-eyed silver-throated  
Bird.  
What flashing depths  
Of jewel-beauty the cutting angles  
Of their flight turns up, what precious  
Fiery opals  
The light spills from among  
Their feathers (neutral-

## Phœbe Ashburner

Brown with every  
Iridescent angle of scarlet  
And gold and scylla-blue and emerald  
Leaping from  
Their movements).  
Their flower-flashing life  
Is supported by essences  
And texture of flowers, they  
The turning flower-motion  
Magnified in dazzling  
Speed.  
How soft and warm, how sharp  
And arrow-brilliant  
Is their life, chiselled unbearably  
Fine with smallness as  
Of mountain-flowers, the exquisite  
Flaming point  
Of bird-life, perfect ecstatic  
Flickering among the leaves or  
Sitting with tiny  
Feathered weight on the etched  
Branches, uncatchable-delicate  
As fastest thought-scents  
From the quick.

## DAYLIGHT WITHDRAWS

**T**HE daylight withdraws, falling  
Away to the luminous  
Ends of the streets, where  
Sky's clarity  
Of blue daylight retires  
Through its own texture into  
Bright mist.  
The river  
Has a film on its water;  
The gulls though  
Above its surface catch

## Three Poems

Day's silver edges still  
On the sharp sweeping petals  
Of their wings, shaking  
Arrows of light  
Across the wind.

Here,  
In this room, the light is  
Lurking and failing, making  
A transitory daylight candle  
Among the white flowers which  
Now float stemless above  
The still day-shining glass in the dark  
Air. The sky  
(Blue become equal grey) is  
Backward sucked  
Over the opposite roofs of  
The houses balanced  
Cardboard-clear in the radiant  
Dusk. The new-lit  
Street-lamp shines  
In through the window, making  
A patch of flecked  
Deepening yellow  
Light on the darkest  
Wall. The day  
Falls through the hole in itself, which  
It has bored by its  
Duration, into  
Night.

## STARS

**T**HE stars above the unseen  
Road are burning  
White-fiery in the black  
Flame of the night, singeing  
The furthest fire-thin edges  
Of the black twigs.  
Fold behind fold in the apparent

## Phoebe Ashburner

Blackness  
Luminosity stretches, deeper  
Than the deep star-supporting  
Sky. Untellably  
Deep and dazzling are  
The constellated clusters  
On the heaven-dark branches  
Of rarest air – jewel-cuts  
In the texture of the night, edging  
The fabric with light, making  
Drops of unearthly  
Essence of water arrested  
In their falling; small celestial  
Knives that pierce  
Through the eyeballs to the heart's  
Quick (one star  
Fell, dying in its own  
Bright burning, as if  
My essence had swayed and swept  
Through itself).  
Fiercely each star  
Sings its blazing note of  
Fire-white colour – burning  
Blue, and radiant  
Green; feathers  
In the night-bright plumage  
Of the soaring jewelled and night-soft  
Bird of the spirit, arching  
Through the starry sky from horizon  
To horizon.

The path below my feet  
Is unseen, for the stars are  
Rattling pointed against  
My skin; and my face is among them.  
The earth, by day  
Visible below the starless  
Day-blue sky, is emptied  
Back again into its sidereal  
Origin; unseen the ground now,  
Dissolved into its reality in the burning  
Sky; and I also  
Am poured back into the sky,  
Star-washed.

## Three Poems

The rim of the horizon  
Lightens, as though  
The first waves of an intense white  
Sea flowed over it;  
For the moon sends  
Her bright flooding shadow  
Spread before her rising.  
On one side the hidden  
Moon; on the other the crescent yellow  
Window of the house I go to  
Sudden emerging  
From the rolling black  
Invisibility.

Outside in the night how small  
And unprotected the houses are, turning  
The bright eyes of their lamps inwards  
Away from the night which surges  
Up to the very walls, and flows between  
The cracks of the lamplight.  
From house to star the searchlight  
Of one's vision turns through all  
The degrees of difference; yet  
The star flows in its own  
Serene singing circle, nor  
Bends aside so much as  
To destroy the house, or even  
Itself to become invisible, for  
The earth and I and you  
Are floating in the circle  
Of the stars.



To G. M. J. and K. M. H.

## Twenty Years On

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**T**WENTY years on; yes; but – judging by the diary – not growing older and older: only as yet older and younger.

It is with mixed feelings that I read my account of life at the famous school whose blue-and-white tie it is my privilege to wear. In fact the tie reposes in its drawer. I am not the kind of alumnus Harrow much approves of, delicacy therefore forbids me to advertise a connection that is only gratifying to one of the parties involved. But I do not forswear the kind of person I am, or give myself a wholly disagreeable impression of human nature: hence the mixed feelings.

Though I have come to cherish a little reciprocal disapproval of Harrow (as of all institutions where one sex is segregated) my memories of her have not become less moving with the passage of time. How softly the airs of spring caressed our cheeks as we walked, my friends and I, on that high up-lifted path between the Grove and Church Hill, echoing one another's faith in virtue and imagination! That was the best of Harrow for me – the setting of beeches along the graveyard up above the roofs, the coincidence of our being there together to cheer and admire one another, and rouse in each

other's hearts a first keen anticipation of what the world had in store for us – love, martyrdom, madness, fame, despair. That was Harrow, as much as the rather footling curriculum which, by keeping us constantly on the run, not only limited opportunities for mischief but also made it nearly impossible for us to collect our wits.

While it would be stupid of me to belittle my debt to Harrow, I do not feel obliged to pretend that the average school day was congenial to my temperament. How was one to concentrate, what with the usual schoolboy racket going on, and the chopping and changing from geography to French, from cricket to dynamics, from prayers to the elements of tactics? The voice of my better judgment is still and small, and I have always found it a great strain listening to it either when the air is full of noise or when I am being forced to hurry about on a diversity of errands.

Perhaps they have simplified the routine at Harrow since twenty years ago. But I fear there can have been no going back to Walter Trevelyan's Golden Age, with its foison of whole holidays, when the boys, having put their cuttle-fish to bed, strolled round to the Headmaster's for a *recherché* little supper of partridges, peaches and wine.

## Twenty Years On

A younger Harrovian who has read the diary tells me that what has changed most is the scholars. In his time there were no manic-depressive actions and reactions, no heroes, bullies or eminent sky-larkers. His fellows were all on a level of cultivated detachment. They submitted resignedly, he says, to the discomforts of this old-fashioned institution where the intellectual fare was so coarse. My friend must allow me some doubts. Not a few of his contemporaries have been seen in the Philistine camp, and I should not be surprised if care of Goliath was to be their permanent address.

My own generation at Harrow, alas! was ill-starred. About one in five lost their lives in the war, most of them as much children as Natasha's little brother in *War and Peace*. I remember in 1914 meeting some old farm labourers in Kent who were brandishing their scythes and crying: 'Just wait till we get at them Roosians!' We at Harrow knew it was Prussia, not Russia, we were fighting, but hardly why or to what end. Certainly, after a while the more idealistic young soldiers began to hope it was a war to outlaw war, to establish peace, and a reign of justice, and brotherhood and good-will among the nations. . . .

This is a bitter subject. One in five.

Patsy Duff was killed, Patsy, who offended me so much (oh why?) by affectionately referring to his mother as his dam. The war came home to me when Patsy, then an ensign in the Guards, visited us at Harrow and told us of his exploits among loose women. I worried over the problem: did the

means justify the end? If Patsy had to be morally degraded (as I put it to myself) for victory to be won, could victory be worth winning?

Sam was killed, and from a letter he wrote me the night before going over the top for the first and last time it is clear he knew what was in store for him. He did not hate the Germans. He believed, in his ecstasy of agony, that God was going to take him to heaven, so that he could be there to welcome his friends when their turn came. I was a cadet in training at a seaside town when I got the news of his death. I remember walking on the downs, very embittered, with my sense of outrage made almost unbearable by a feeling of alienation from nature. To some boys in their 'teens nature symbolizes as much as art can to the more mature and sophisticated. Nature stands to them for life, and love of life, and to be identified with nature as they ideally conceive her is perhaps their chief happiness. On that lowering autumn afternoon I felt I was rejected by the hills and the sea, as if I had been that evil man whom Theseus met and hurled over the cliff, and whom the waters would not accept nor the land take back. It seemed to me that in some way I had connived at Sam's death. It seemed to me, divided as I was in my opinions, that my grief was hypocritical.

Simon Gully and the Rodneys were not killed. This is astonishing. For like so many bullies they were not cowards at all but exceptionally brave. Wherever did people get the idea that bullies are cowards? Simon Gully and the Rodneys had always seemed anxious to get as well as to give hard

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

knocks. They came through the war safe and sound, with many medals. They were all big fellows, built to be soldiers by an absent-minded Providence that modelled them on the lustier condottieri. I suppose the ideal twentieth-century soldier is a little fellow who can creep about and hide himself quickly from the clever devilries of modern science. One of the Rodneys did – now I come to think of it – get something the matter with him on active service. He had to have the little toe of his left foot amputated: that was the total casualties of the gang.

Bunny was not killed, but Bunny is dead. He was a poet; he loved Shelley as well as Shelley's hero, Bonaparte, and he died Shelley's death later on. He was torn between his devotion to a family of elder soldier brothers, and his nostalgia for perfect love and truth. He wanted love and truth *at once*. He saw in many means the direct repudiation of the human end – humanity. He had the insight of the very pure, which is only rivalled by the insight of the very calm and intelligent. If he had lived his judgments would always have been valuable, though often disturbing, to his friends. Sitting at his bedside at Harrow by candle-light I first heard the lines: –

He lives, he wakes – 'tis Death is  
dead, not he;  
Mourn not for Adonais.

Johnnie was not killed. Johnnie, my hero-villain, rather had his part thrust on him by me. I ought to have escaped all damage from him except a few unimportant bruises on my shins

and elsewhere on the surface of my body. It was not his fault that I made a doormat of myself and invited him to wipe his shoes on me.

It is hardly clear what I expected of him. For I was no Platonic lover. I had been in love with a little girl – such a charming creature! – when I was twelve; I regularly adored the leading ladies in plays I was taken to see, and I was destined to have my heart correctly broken – and mended – by females, all as nature is understood to intend. Yet it would have given me a moment of sublime satisfaction if Johnnie had come to me one day and said – well what? Perhaps that it had suddenly dawned on him that I was his friend; that he realized how much it meant to him to have such a friend; that he now knew that the reason why I wrote out his punishments for him in his own handwriting was that I cared for him very much – and not that I had the makings of a forger (as he unkindly suggested to Elliot Bowen), and was glad of the opportunity for practising my craft.

No; solid comradeship was impossible between Johnnie and me. In how much higher a state of grace than I, with my misplaced loyalty, was that seventeen-year-old French friend of mine who, while repudiating the charge of susceptibility, could add with a shrug: '*Enfin, j'ai eu mes petites faiblesses, évidemment!*'

If Harrow had really been a microcosm of the world there would have been a young heroine or two available for me to admire, and I should not have concentrated so much emotion on a hero. (The admiration need not have gone to the length of the *petites*

## Twenty Years On

*faiblesses*.) But how can public schools possibly be regarded as microcosms of the world when there are no women, babies or old people in them, and even the adult males, the masters, are relatively so few, and selected, moreover, for their primitive virtues? Public schools are more on the pattern of a battalion of soldiers than of the human community.

Cut off from women, boys are in a sad emotional predicament. Some drift into homosexual ways. Others get into an unattractive sensual frame of mind. The most sensitive and unhappy ones fall into the error of idealizing women. Women are quite charming enough without this; they are women, not angels, and it is not a man's business to idealize them, but to try to understand them and to please them.

Though it is true that soldiers are not cut off from women, conversation in barracks proves how deplorable it is for so many men to be so much together. If the world is to become civilized, it must first be civilian. Above all, no battalions. Let boys and girls go to school together, and monasticism be reserved for those who have a call to it.

Of the Harrow masters I came into touch with only one was a man of the world. This was the 'Dr. Shelley' of the diary. And what a refreshing person he was! Suave, intelligent, with a sense of fun instead of the too common sense of humour. It was a delight to talk with him – when I was a junior boy it felt like being let out of a cage. I am still very grateful to you, Dr. Shelley!

That distinguished man, George

Townsend Warner, was of a more donnish calibre. He had a fine presence; he was tall and dark, and rather like an eagle. He was fierce and majestic, rather like a lion, so that when he spoke gently one felt like a Daniel *malgré-soi* saluted by a man-eater. I have seldom been more thrilled than when Warner praised an essay I had written and told me I might copy it into the fat book in the Vaughan Library to which some eminent Harrovian writers had contributed in their day. How much less the privilege meant to me than Warner's approbation is shown by my neglect to take advantage of it.

One of his most endearing traits was a certain susceptibility to flattery. And we liked a downright sense he had, and even slyly expressed, of his own worth. He began every morning with the prayer: 'We give thee humble and hearty thanks O most merciful Father for our Founder, John Lyon, and for all other our Benefactors, by whose benefits we are here brought up to godliness and *good learning* . . .' and he would put just a little emphasis on those last two words and then pause for a second, as if challenging anyone to deny it in *this* class.

Mr. Warner died on a September morning, nearly twenty years ago, the day after his boys had come back to Harrow from their holidays. Mr. Higgs is dead too.

Higgs was a school servant, a short little man in spectacles and a bowler hat. One of his duties was to toll the school bell. How many of us knew, I wonder, that in his spare time he played the violin and made up verses? He was kind enough to give

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

me a copy of one of his poems, which related to angels in heaven.

Higgs was my friend in need. For one foggy evening between lessons I lightly sketched my name (as I thought) in letters of chocolate on the outer wall of the Old Speech Room above the steps. What was my horror in the light of next morning to find the name printed large and firm in that wretched Gala Peter on the most conspicuous site at Harrow, precincts to which people came from afar to see carved up the names of Peel and Byron. My form master gave me the inside of a day to erase my signature. That was all very well. Herr Peter's remarkable invention is of the highest quality. The chocolate resisted my efforts, and I scrubbed in vain till Higgs came to the rescue with a pail of warm water, soap, a good brush and a strong arm. When the name was got rid of there was still matter for concern, as the old stone now showed a glowing cartouche of cleanliness; a trace of it may be there to this day. Higgs and I were friends from that terrible morning.

Passed from among us too, I am sorry to say, is 'Monsieur Marchand'. This kindly Frenchman was my Dr. B.; he entertained me to partridges, peaches and wine. Dinner with him was civilized and cheerful. One felt a thousand miles from school. The maid servant was trim. We the guests talked like experienced globe-trotters, generalized about nations, compared notes about the foreign spas to which we had escorted our dyspeptic or rheumatic parents; and Monsieur Marchand politely consulted his memory when Elgar, who had talked least

and sipped most, asked him whether he had read *Ordeal by Bottle*.

A point of resemblance between Walter Trevelyan and the modern diarist, a curious one since Walter was obviously an open-air and sporting person, is their indifference to games. I cannot take Harrow's inability in recent years to beat Eton at Lord's too much *au tragique*, as cricket seemed to me to bore nine out of ten of us. One summer, when somebody had written a naughty sentence across the Headmaster's notice-board and refused to own up, half holidays were stopped. The school was delighted. Better two hours of work and four of comparative freedom than six hours of compulsory maundering on the cricket fields. Unfortunately the authorities were not long in discovering the secret of our phlegm, and half holidays were restored even though the author of the naughty words had not come forward.

Looking back, I find one trait in the boy who wrote the diary that reconciles me to him: his love of books and their writers. In this he has been constant. He still believes it is their serious purpose to remind us of the goodness of the good and the badness of the bad and the loveliness of love. They are written, they write, not to take us out of ourselves but to reveal us to ourselves.

I am glad the diary notes something of the effect first reading Plato had on me. In an autobiography written late in life another Harrovian, John Addington Symonds, tells of a similar experience. He had gone to London from school, taking a crib of Plato with him. After seeing a play

## Twenty Years On

he started the crib in bed, and the sun was shining before he could put it down. That night, he says, 'was one of the most important nights of my life. . . . Here in the "Phaedrus" and the "Symposium", in the Myth of the Soul, I discovered the revelation I had been waiting for, the consecration of a long-cherished idealism. It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato.'

Of course one does not have to go to Harrow for an introduction to Plato or to the 'gallant and honourable old sage.' But since I was there, I regret not having been on the classical side, instead of only cramming enough Greek and Latin to be able to pass into Oxford. Now that variety is non-stop everywhere, to be able to quote Horace aptly would, it seems to me, add a spice to life.

The conclusion of the matter is, I hope this fragment will not appear to express stronger passions than I feel at the time of writing. I do not even want to dispute that Eton is our premier school, or, as Jules Potache put it, 'the betterest collège of all the England.' Mr. Maurice Baring has said he believes there is not an Englishman who would not be proud to have been to Eton. Yes, but I think any Englishman who has been to Harrow may be still prouder, for though Harrow is only about half the size of Eton it is a good deal more than half as distinguished.

In fact there are many things I should like to see abolished before Harrow goes. And so, say I, till these other reforms have been carried out, *Stet Fortuna Domus*, and may Harrow friends continue to walk to-

gether after Sunday chapel echoing one another's faith, as we did, in virtue and imagination; perhaps imagining - perhaps planning - perhaps being destined to put into effect that very abolition in the postponement of which I readily acquiesce.

### *TWO HARROW DIARIES 1914-1915: 1812-1815*

It happens that about the time the war against Napoleon was reaching an end, a boy at Harrow was keeping a diary, noting the chief events of his daily life. Some of these, the numerous holidays and the 'inflammations', as he called bonfires, depended directly on the progress made by the allied armies.

A hundred years later another boy, during another great war, was keeping a Harrow diary.

The second diary has been printed first, for the reason among others that owing to its more complex character it has seemed reasonable to make a larger selection from the entries. The manuscript runs - or ran - to more than three hundred thousand words. The 1916 volume (third and last) was destroyed before the plan of publishing some extracts was mooted.

### *HOLIDAYS: JANUARY, 1914*

5.1.14

Lloyd George has begun the New Year badly; but 'It's an ill wind, etc.' He announced to a reporter, when speaking about the Navy, that England and Germany were now on good terms. Some German newspapers promptly replied that this was by no means the case. After all, we are at last aware of the feelings of Germany towards ourselves, which is a point gained.

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15: 1812-15

18.1.14

Sir Alfred Tailor came this afternoon. There is always something objectionable about anyone who takes it for granted that you are not old enough to appreciate or understand such-and-such a thing.

Why should strange awful Beings exist and be impersonated and why should God not?

19.1.14

I am not so despondent about returning to school as I have always been hitherto.

I have started my story. I must really stick to it. The characters are: - Myself, greatly improved, my ideal, and others derived from people I know. The plot is still uncertain, but I know how to start.

20.1.14

I am already arranging my things preparatory to returning to Harrow. I am glad that Asshemore has been sacked. But I wish that Simon Gully were to be prevented from coming back by 'indisposition'. It's funny how people like him are never by any chance ill at all.

### HARROW: LENT TERM, 1914

27.1.14

One should always make a good first impression on everybody, for they will treat you in accordance with the opinion they have formed of you at your first meeting. And as one is always meeting fresh people the need for continual self-control is fairly obvious.

I had a slight talk with Ducat again to-day. He is about nineteen, he has had a charity remove into the Upper School because it is his last term, he thinks 'Shakespeare and all poetry is damned rot.' I cannot possibly add any remarks about him after this.

28.1.14

Wednesday is a very hard day, with

a prolonged possibility of skewing. Tomorrow I am up to the Headmaster for Divinity. Horrors!

29.1.14

I feel more lonely than ever, but I am at all events going to stick to my guns . . . I still ask myself whether the naturally brave man or the man who forces himself to be brave is the worthiest of the two. I cannot come to any satisfactory conclusion at all.

I was taken aback by Ducat's frankness. He plainly said that his views were such-and-such. They were beastly from my point of view, but *chacun a son gout*, and I couldn't say they were wrong.

The Headmaster isn't so alarming after all.

6.2.14

I believe that everything has got to have a counterbalancing supplement. I cannot for the moment put the example which is in my head into decent English. However this is most certainly so.

8.2.14

I am annoyed by a vague notion that the fact that my age is only fifteen enables any affections I may feel to be called unimportant and passing. I like Disraeli's remark: 'There is a magic in the memory of schoolboy friendships: it softens the heart, and even affects the nervous system of those who have no hearts.' Johnnie will remain firm in my memory as long as I live.

Oh, but the world is cruel! One moment I think of the beauty and goodness upon earth, and the next I am tormented by the everlasting thoughts of misery, pain and suffering prevalent.

11.2.14

The beauty of God is very greatly decreased, I think, by religious dogmas, in the same way that anything in its wrong place is deteriorated.

A person who considers Archibald

## Twenty Years On

Thorburn a great artist and thinks that Vandyke is a photographer is not half so provoking as a person who having bad taste lets everyone know he has some taste, and who uses the word 'genteel', there being a rather cheap atmosphere round himself. I am referring latterly to Wheeler, who considers that passe-par-tout frames are much too severe.

Andrew being in bed, the whole passage is taking advantage of him, and is conducting experiments, such as making hydrogen, moulding cartridges, etc.

12.2.14

To-night I have been reading about Louis XIV, and somehow this has made me feel the unimportance of any individual. No-one, or at least very, very few people are of any real account, and even then they are only of account on earth. And what is Earth, after all? I should dismiss such thoughts from my brain.

I have got a sort of sneaking sympathy for poor old Cicero. There were in him the elements of a great man, and, poor devil, he was at a disadvantage owing to his being an outsider. I have often felt as he must have felt on a rather larger scale.

19.2.14

The latest craze in the house is to career about mounted on someone else's back, armed with a water pistol. Great sieges are carried on; in some rooms it looks as if the course of a river had been turned.

20.2.14

Lecky gave away all the raggies to-night, water-pistols were confiscated and they all got four tight. Jolly plucky of him to do this, because they may give him a rotten time for it.

To-day while I was in Eddy's three chaps in there were watching and discussing a certain girl who was walking

slowly up and down on the opposite side of the road. She was obviously trying to attract their attention, and afterwards I noticed her at the same game further down the High Street. I have since discovered much about her. A certain boy was going back to his house after dark from specials, when he met her, and, according to the person from whom I heard the story, 'she offered to — *you know*' To refer to *any* girl as a bitch and a whore is a thing I can't stand, but what about the boy who last term asked me if I had got a child, and said he had got one himself?

That these stories are true there is no doubt. Besides, most boys are incapable of keeping a secret.

21.2.14

Lecky has been put into Coventry, and I have been threatened to be treated likewise if I speak to him. He was sympathetic to me in my trouble, so I am giving him the choice. If he likes I will join him in Coventry. I dislike the idea, but it would be unfair to do otherwise.

24.2.14

The funniest thing is to watch the little Nigger testing his breakfast to see that there is no ham present. If anyone is sick with him they pretend that what is ham, is not, but he is never taken in.

3.3.14

The greatest patriot is he who has no country. It seems that they who wish for the welfare of England would like to take a very short remedy for the repressing of socialism. I am referring to boys who cannot see that the countrymen and not the country are the things that require patriotism.

There is a complete lack of mercy in the majority of boys. I think of the Pharisees when I see the horror with which they regard anyone who hits below the belt, and then the ease with which



## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

they take advantage of a poor devil in Coventry. They observe the letter but not the spirit of the law.

Dr. Shelley says that a genius is one to whom Fortune has given an *unfair* share of something. I am inclined to think that Fortune makes a point of being unfair.

11.3.14

To-day was a Field Day, and the Corps left during first school to the music of the band. The march was 'Charlie is ma darling', and for five minutes I longed to be in the Corps.

Old Harblow has succumbed to a violent attack of chicken pox, and I feel a bit itchy myself.

13.3.14

To-night there was a tremendous tug-of-war, seven aside. They tugged for twenty minutes till they were melting in sweat and till their hands were torn, and neither side had won.

Last night Old Harblow (who has got chicken pox) went absolutely mad and imagined that he was an aeroplane. In his delirium he tried to fly from one end of sicker to the other. He was originally found standing on his head.

18.3.14

The latest game is to place an umbrella on the floor in a vertical position with one's forehead against the handle, and walk round and round till collapse ensues. I collapsed after about six rounds; Johnnie broke all records by going round 76 times. Shows his pluck! I still feel horribly sea-sick.

25.3.14

I got hold of a splitting headache during third school, while Bertaux was giving a graphic description of life in the French army, and it has got worse since. As misfortunes never come singly, Shuckers set ten times too much work this evening, and I am freezing as a

consequence of not having had time to light my fire.

As the house is in a very turbulent state, and Andrew feels compelled to drop on someone, he drops on inoffensive people for minute offences, and leaves the hardened criminals alone. So to-day he admonished me for whistling in the passage, a thing that is not even supposed to be forbidden. As for going for the Rodneys, he wouldn't think of it.

3.4.14

A horrible incident occurred to-day at lunch. I was sitting silent when I heard Johnnie telling Simon Gully that he had felt ill last night, and craned my head in his direction to hear more about it. Whereupon Johnnie told me in a loud voice that 'listeners never hear good of themselves.' I blushed most frightfully. Somehow his words cut me awfully.

I had an idea later to-day which I was at first rather frightened at:—suppose Fate thinks it better for Johnnie that I should have no dealings with him, and that any influence I possess should be bad for him? And yet it is rather impossible for me to work on such a vague basis. I received a cut at lunch which will not heal, as in Parsifal, except if treated by the agency which caused it.

HARROW: SUMMER TERM, 1914

4.5.14

Beastly day to-day altogether. I now do Latin with a devil called O'Conor. I sweated for two hours and then trembled with funk for one more. This was rather counterbalanced, thank goodness, by an hour of tique with Beaman, who is quite the gentlest old dear imaginable. He hums and haws for a bit, then thoroughly runs down mathematics, and makes it quite clear that he only teaches it because he has got to earn his living, not through any devotion to the subject. Then he takes care not to overwork anybody,

## Twenty Years On

'Because you have been up for so many hours already.' Dear old chap.

5.5.14

I am now in the top division of French, which is taken by a nice short-sighted Frenchman called Marchand. His classroom is hung with French posters, notices and pictures. His forms are littered with every imaginable French periodical from *L'Illustration* to *Pêle-Mêle*. One reads these during work. He has a dog named Fifi, who performs, during work if possible. Old Harblow did some vaulting this morning, and Marchand never noticed.

8.5.14

This morning I gave Johnnie a con of Lamartine, and for one line quoted 'The path of glory leads but to the grave.' He was put on by Shuckers, who was delighted.

So am I; that's why I mention it.

Johnnie narrowly escaped a whopping to-day for riotous behaviour during lunch.

18.5.14

One of an Author's chief merits should be that of being unprejudiced. To be so he must needs look at things from outside, and criticise himself criticising. I am unable at the present moment to make out either what I have done, am doing or am going to do, consequently I will not try to state anything as a fact except what I have stated already.

19.5.14

I felt positively ashamed in chapel this morning, so rottenly stupid were the hymns. Then I went to meet Mr. Bingham, about curing my hay fever by Christian Science. A long conversation ensued. The Christian Scientist idea of Jesus is an extremely sensible one, as far as I can judge. Bingie talked a great deal, adding various very confidential statements about the Headmaster, etc., and miraculous cures at which he himself

has assisted, to his speech. I was not impressed, on the whole, as none of the important things he told me are at all new to me, also he is not warranted to be impressive owing to his small size and frankness.

Johnnie has been in here this evening. I told him about Bingie and we talked a little. He told me he can go to sleep as soon as his head touches the pillow - 'that is where the fools gain!' he said. He infers that he is empty-headed - I felt rather as if I would like to fall on my knees before him and swear allegiance.

20.5.14

I am beginning to be more hopeful of Mankind in general. I have found kindness in very unexpected quarters lately, which moved me immensely.

24.5.14

Beastly day, as Sundays always are here. Violently cold: boring lecture in the afternoon. Wrote my letter and did most of to-morrow's work this morning. The sermon wasn't particularly bad: love was brought in quite well.

During tea there was a tremendous rag, including an asparagus and cider fight which drew shouts of laughter.

29.5.14

This morning I did some French con for Johnnie. Of course I was particularly bad - so cussed is luck! However, Johnnie lay in the armchair, and I sat looking over his shoulder.

Puis soudain s'en alla, comme un oiseau qui passe,

Alors je reprenais, la tête un peu moins lasse

Mon œuvre interrompue.

16.6.14

First of all Hugh Rodney makes me feel a fool in this way: - I try really to make the words of the Lord's Prayer - '... as we forgive them that trespass against us' be true as applied to me. And

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

I make myself believe that I bear no grudge against Hugh Rodney and his crew. He makes me feel a fool, does Hugh Rodney, for I don't forgive him after to-night; and yet a bigger fool because it doesn't matter a scrap to him whether I forgive him or not.

6.7.14

There was great excitement to-day over a sort of wager that no-one could eat (not drink) 5 bob's worth of food at Eddy's straight off. Hugh Rodney and Sutclif got as far as 4 bob each, and then, I imagine, were sick.

### SUMMER HOLIDAYS, 1914

31.7.14

War. A war of races. Germany is under martial law, the Austrians are in Servia and Belgrade has fallen. The Russians are massing over by the Galician frontier. If they cross that frontier – !

One of the greatest crises the world has seen, undoubtedly. Diplomacy has been thrown to the winds and the long-expected world-war is imminent. Europe is, so to speak, cleared for action.

I feel so much a member of the whole world in general that I can think of nothing but the oppressing, horrible reality of this wanton war.

I see no reason why I should not be killed at once, any more than that anybody should be killed now.

15.8.14

I wonder that there are sufficient physical heroes and moral cowards left to carry on war.

18.8.14

At present England at war is much like England at peace. As the Press is not too communicative one would almost think that Britain is not concerned. It is disgusting to read the eternal disparagement of the Germans, in all the

newspapers. I feel awfully sorry for them myself

20.8 14

I feel the presence and horror of war much more when I read Zola's book *The Attack on the Mill* than I do every morning now when I read in the *Times* of the German advance in Belgium.

### HARROW. CHRISTMAS TERM, 1914

21 9 14

Ah! This is something more like life.

Enter Johnnie. He stays for quarter of an hour discussing the war. Andrew, de Foljambe and – what joy! – Hugh Rodney have joined the army. Half the school has, I believe. And Johnnie wants to. I am on top passage and my room commands a gorgeous view of London.

We have just been trying to spot the aerial searchlights. I am feeling very jolly. I'm in the Modern Upper Sixth, top form, and am going to make a bid for top of it. Johnnie is head of hall.

The obnoxious crew have been made Sixth Formers – to keep them quiet.

22.9.14

I think that to-day was by far the happiest day I have had since last term. Johnnie (I feel as if I were walking a tight-rope – steady!) Johnnie, I say, was most friendly. He sits next to me at lunch, too.

In form I am third in the house, and in chapel sit two rows from the front.

This evening some sixteen of us had a violently exciting game of footer in the yard. After a game like that it is almost comprehensible to me that fellows of seventeen like the idea of war. Everyone bellows and charges regardless of hacks. Scrums, dust, fierce whispers, legs, scuffles, shouts of triumph.

Various masters walk about in uniform every day.

# Twenty Years On

23.9.14

To-day I did my first recruit drill. great fun. The whole school with a few exceptions is now in the Corps.

27.9.14

Early this morning while I was still in bed Johnnie came in, showed me his essay and sat reading in the arm chair.

This evening Bridges preached a military sermon. Why, if Johnnie goes into the army I will go too. I pray that the war may rapidly be over – in a month or two.

9.10.14

At lunch in making out the list for football I heard scathing remarks about myself accompanied by much laughter. Then footer. Unpopular fellows saw a way of regaining favour. Everybody did his best to lay me out: Simon Gully and King succeeded, and insults of 'well played!' were added to the injury. Even that hour came to an end. As I hurried up, a well aimed brick flung by Johnnie hit me on the head: and stones in various places.

13.10.14

'And I got a ripping set of stamps out of the raffle,' said Alec Potts. I despised him for thinking that such a thing as stamp collecting could compare with the comfort of friendship. He still cares for his stamps – my Dagon is shattered.

14.10.14

To-night and henceforward we must draw blinds and curtains: turn our lamps from the windows and use as little light as possible. Why? Because the Zeppelins are coming.

23.10.14

Last night Hilaire Belloc gave us an excellent lecture in Strategy. He explained that, all else being equal, the larger numbers must win a war, or only battle. Consequently the smaller force

must try to come upon the enemy divided.

Then Belloc explained the 'Strategic square' or 'Napoleonic lozenge', a device by which the smaller numbers may beat larger numbers.

29.11.14

One thing I never cease to ask myself. Should selfish people whose selfishness does not hurt anyone be allowed to go on being selfish? I think they should: for otherwise happiness would altogether die out of the world.

10.11.14

My ambitious schemes of writing have one drawback, if not more. That is that I am conscious of finding out more about the world every day, and I might discredit on Tuesday what I wrote on Monday. And till I have had a little experience I must keep quiet and write essays. Of course if I was going to be a writer such as Jules Verne and simply turn out imaginative stories, or such as Dumas, and play tricks with history, it would be different. But I am of the Wells-Brontë-Zola type. Psychology-Society.

## CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS, 1914

24.12.14

'Christ walks the Earth to-night,' thinks the faithful believer. What a mockery, what an insult, what an agony, what a second Crucifixion, what an exposition! Nothing more typical of this world and its inhabitants can be invented than this historical Christmas Eve. It disproves religion: it shows the Christian world in the process of destroying itself. It shows legalised murder on land, underground, on sea, in the sea, in the air, in the country and in the city, in the palace, in the mansion and in the hut. Every man bears sword or rifle; men fall as I write; infernal bombs flash and kill; hate, vengeance, passion, greed, ambition,

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

IGNORANCE, meet the shadow of Christ to-night and spit in His face. The most unthinkable awful situation.

Man is in possession of many deadly powers: he is not advanced enough in civilisation to avoid burning his fingers. Like a child playing with fire.

28.12.14

It strikes me that the world is a beastly world. Courage is the only bright spot of any size. An English flotilla of destroyers entered Cuxhaven accompanied by sea-planes which bombarded the fortifications. They were later picked up by submarines. Courage.

Judging from myself at present, men have got no hold upon their sexual passions. It seems quite reasonable from one point of view, but it dispels any idea of honesty.

6.1.15

There is a little actress at the Hippodrome. She is small and flat chested, she has got dark hair, which I dislike, and her upper lip is too pointed and protrudes too much. But her eyes . . .

### *HARROW: LENT TERM, 1915*

25.1.15

By to-day the whole school has settled down to the monotony of term-time, the holidays having been wrapped up and put away at the back of the mind. I spent most of the morning in reassuring myself of what I already knew, namely that there is hardly a spark of human sympathy in the Sergeant-Major.

The ice at lunch has been broken . . . slightly. Johnnie and I exchanged a few polite and distant words. I am now playing a part I have never played before. The 'hail-fellow-well-met' business—speaking a lot about nothing to everybody.

3.2.15

I made my first acquaintance with

Socrates to-day in Plato's Apology. I read the noble defence of the gallant and honourable old sage: and was filled with enthusiasm for him and with hatred for Meletus. One phrase especially pleased me. Socrates says that no man can really be injured by one worse than himself. Gallant and wise and great, worthy to live for ever, as he surely will.

7.3 15

Vaughan talked to Johnnie to-day at Sam's request, with the result that there is twice as much ragging as before. This afternoon Alister, Desmond and I went to the Organ Recital. Schumann's Canon in B minor, and Wagner's Fire and Sleep music (Valkyrie) made me bubble over with enthusiasm. A Toccata by Bach was quite beyond my comprehension, and I would have called it extremely dull.

A Miss Wiggins sang very moderately, poor thing.

22.3 15

For the benefit of future generations let me state how the war affects Harrow School. Yesterday a German aeroplane indulged in a little harmless bomb-dropping not many miles away. But to all intents and purposes the war might be non-existent. Though brothers and fathers are fighting, Harrovians behave as usual and eat as much as usual, if not more. Ned Hodge's brother is missing, but that does not prevent him from ragging Sam all day long. Men die and ships sink and hearts break, and the world rolls on the same as ever. To-night we had the time of our lives. Alister and I contrived an enormous and simply terrifying ghost and placed it near the door in his room. After lights out, Sam, Ned, Nick, Foley as well as Alister and myself hid ourselves under beds, tables, chairs and curtains. The fire was low. Then Wheeler came along. He *was* alarmed! One by one we appeared after much ghostliness, and eventually we shut

# Twenty Years On

Wheeler up in the bed. . . . It was a very jolly day, and I hope things will go on in this way.

23.3.15

The Bishop of London to-day confirmed some eighty-five of our number, one of the candidates being Johnnie. He was one of the last to go forward for the laying-on of hands, and he had a long way to walk. Every one of the candidates except two were red and looked terrified, but Johnnie and Vestey walked up the aisle in step, smartly and boldly, without any blushing or stumbling. If heart-spoken prayers are any use, then I did something for Johnnie. I prayed hard and long. If God listened, well and good.

24.3.15

To-day the organ failed in Chapel. But the school sang the hymns without faltering – and everyone sang his hardest. How dare people say that the English are unmusical? Though the majority cares only for rag-times, there is a minority as well up in Wagner or Beethoven as any foreigner.

To-day was the first day of spring, and the weather was perfectly wonderful. Even poor suburban little Harrow Hill looked charming in her green dress and blue hat.

This morning we reflected the sun by means of mirrors on to passers-by in the street.

27.3.15

Elliott Bowen and self are thinking of sending an article to the *Morning Post* to start all the old fogeys arguing about whether a campaign of ridicule is not as bad as a campaign of hate.

I had quite a long conversation with Vestey in the morning. He is a clever fellow, and I cannot make out whether he is a swine or not.

EASTER HOLIDAYS, 1915

26.4.15 London

We came up to London to-day. This evening we went to see a musical comedy called *Alice*, and I fell mildly in love with the actress who plays the title part

N.B. Duration of this – two days.

HARROW: SUMMER TERM, 1915

28.5.15

During the corps parade this afternoon we were drilling by sections. I suddenly became aware that I felt like a grown-up among a lot of children. I then wondered whether it would not be better for me to be more like the others, and I did not come to a satisfactory conclusion.

29.5.15

One of Bacon's characteristics, I have read, was that it was contrary to his elevated nature to defend himself heartily against his enemies. This was a great comfort to me, for I have not a spark of interest in clearing myself from the little scandals which various boys spread concerning me. . . . There is in me an inherent slackness which makes me loth to play a very deep game, or to appear other than I am. In small matters I can lie well enough, but no prize on earth can make me feel more important, or can make me of another exterior.

27.6.15

This morning I discovered the culprit who had put the stink bomb in my desk; and on him I inflicted my first whopping, which did not hurt him very much. Johnnie had previously given me a lesson in whopping; very bloodthirsty is Johnnie sometimes.

6.7.15

To-day we began the first round of the House-Matches. I caught one catch

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which apparently looked more difficult than it really was. The opposing side made 330 for 7 wickets; I fear we have no chance of doing anything.

8.7.15

This evening we had *the* prayer: '... that the friendships formed between us here may never through sin be broken or through worldly cares be forgotten.'

16.7.15

I cannot write clearly, especially as I return tired from an exceedingly dull lecture on economy in wartime. The lecturer seemed to take us for a pack of preparatory school children. Upon his statement that women were the spending party in the home, the fourth forms began to clap with great enthusiasm and vigour.

### SUMMER HOLIDAYS, 1915

14.8.15

Lately in my dreams I have been meeting various kings and queens. I offended the late Queen Victoria by calling her 'Your Majesty' instead of 'Madam'. Queen Mary was quite pleasant to talk to, however, and so was King George.

15.8.15

What is the aim of life? If we did not buoy ourselves up with the sordid affairs or selfish pleasures of it, what then should we attend to? Supposing that in the course of centuries Equality, Fraternity Liberty became facts: what then? What then?

20.8.15 Black Game Shooting begins.

Black game shooting begins, does it? Well, well, I suppose that at this minute Johnnie is shooting black game then. My idea of what black game may be is very vague. I can imagine how astonished Johnnie would be to hear that I don't know. . . . I have been reading Ibsen,

whom I think wonderful. But I am in such a mood as to agree with Socrates, for I only know that I know nothing. Some days ago I felt that I wanted someone near whom I could love – just anyone beautiful: but I think this so feeble that I am trying to give up such vain wishings.

### HARROW: CHRISTMAS TERM, 1915

8.10.15

Feeling, I believe, that he had wounded me, Johnnie came into my room this evening ostensibly to smoke a blotting-paper cigarette: meaning to effect a reconciliation. And again after lunch Johnnie came: and this time neither of us quite knew what to say. O infernal minute! Johnnie departed ill-pleased, I thought. Then I remembered Benjamin Franklin's way in such a crisis: and on coming back to the house, with a successful affectation of cheerfulness I asked Johnnie to help me with some tactical problems.

12.10.15

On find this evening Johnnie rated me: and as towards the end of the meal we sat in silence, Teddy because he is always silent, Johnnie because of me and I because of Johnnie, it struck me that my fate is to be the third when two's company. Something like the case of Gregers Werle in the *Wild Duck*, whose destiny it is to be the thirteenth at table. Altogether I am very like Gregers . . . with his 'claim of the ideal'.

14.11.15

It seems to be my natural tendency to live on my affection for others: and to be miserable if a word that might possibly be unkind escapes from the objects of my affection. I am just the opposite of that horrid Miller of the Dee who cared for nobody because nobody cared for him.

18.11.15

*The Winter's Tale*, which I have read

## Twenty Years On

lately, interested and amused me immensely. It struck me that none of the characters are bad characters . . . and this fact altogether adds to the general worth of the play. (I beg the pardon of Autolycus – he is a rogue – one must give him his due.) Even jealous old Leontes is a real good king. There are no villains. Many people on earth are not villains, only good enough people behaving stupidly.

19.11.15

I wonder if everyone sometimes feels a craving for Fame that will go down to Posterity. Personally I feel it, and at the same time my powerlessness. Bunny feels it. He wants to sit down and on the spur of the moment write a poem that will be eternal.

21.11.15

For sheer unpleasantness this Sunday broke all records. Johnnie has been preposterous. I have left his find, and Alister, Sam and Paddy have welcomed me to theirs. Ronald and Bunny and those three are in sympathy with me, and deplore Johnnie's behaviour. It passes my understanding that people will not live in peace. . . . I see that wars will always be.

22.11.15

I had my first breakfast with Sam, Alister and Paddy this morning, and I felt that I was among human beings. They told me that they keep an account and avoid spending too much. We were at ease: there was no snapping or snubbing, nor what is worst of all, strained silence. We just talked, and Alister poured out coffee, and Paddy told me the rules they have made for themselves.

There was a long parade of even unusual tiresomeness this afternoon. I hate this monotonous military game that we play: sooner would I be killed at once than waste my time preparing for it.

The object of drill and drill itself are loathsome.

Love is the primary Beautiful thing: the Arts are secondary: and these in turn are subdivided so that the poet and the philosopher come to find Beauty more frequently and in less remarkable places. And in my mind the aspiration to live in a state of inspiration should be half a man's life. Yes: half his life should be given to looking forward to Beauty, and the other half should be given to improving the lot of the poor.

29.11.15

In the second round of the house matches we played Holman's to-day. Holman's thought they were going to beat us off the field. We got the first base . . . they got one soon after. By this time, however, they were disillusioned about the matter of beating us off. And then Sam took yards and shot a second base for us. Thus things remained till within four minutes of time. Our people played like heroes, and all the time a damp fog was rising and falling, so that there were moments when one could hardly see across the ground. Teddy Morton fought like a Trojan, and various other people besides did the same. But four minutes before time they equalled us, and we shall have to play them again.

1.12.15

Alister and Sam, Bunny, Paddy and I talked about Johnnie and afterwards about religion for hours. Sam sticks loyally to the story of Adam and Eve.

16.12.15

The last head of the house, Elliott Bowen, is fighting in Serbia.

The head before him, Old Harblow, is fighting in Persia.

The one before that, Jim Bruce, is fighting in Turkey.

The one before that, Moray Macle-hose, is wounded in Flanders.



## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

17.12.15

Another day has crawled to an end. The term's work is over . . . strange thought. Our trunks have been brought from downstairs and lie clumsily in the middle of the untidy little rooms, leaving hardly an available inch of space for one to move about in. Bunny has managed however to find room for his legs: and at present he is engrossed in reading the life of his hero, Napoleon, for the hundredth time. We quarrel about Napoleon, for I hate that monster.

Nowadays one cannot with propriety be ambitious for anything but military glory, and I hate everything military. With the present war on one cannot look forward to doing anything good or great except dying.

20.12.15

Good-bye Harrow. I travelled to London in the same compartment as a herculean soldier off to the front: and I thought that if in two years the war is still on I had best go and die on the field of battle. When I arrived at home to my astonishment everyone was still in bed. At nine o'clock I breakfasted for the second time. I am feeling exceedingly optimistic: and hope gradually to set down the reasons I have for feeling so.

### CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

21.12.15

The life in all things living is the same: and one: and being part of that one all souls are alike. Life which is in God is eternal and perfect: but the bodies which it inhabits on earth are mortal and imperfect. . . . The greatest hindrance to the Spirit is heredity, the law by which bad traits as well as good can be handed down from father to son. But everything that lives contains the Spirit. In myself I can feel the existence of the universe. I am part of the universe, but the universe is contained in me as well.

26.12.15

All night the wind shrieked down my chimney and the rain pattered away on the window sill.

This afternoon we had a party of Belgians, including two small boys. The remarks of these young fellows illustrated the difference between English boys and foreign boys as a whole. The latter lack real gentlemanliness. Take an example. We were having a game. For various reasons one of the players had to do what the rest required in order to recover a forfeited article. The question was: what should that person have to do? In unison the small boys called: 'Demandeur des questions embarrassantes!'

27.12.15

Alec Potts took me to the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I did not enjoy as much as I ought to have. Oberon looked such a clown in his breastplate and wings . . . and I could not help thinking that he ought to enlist. Titania and the rest of the females were ugly, or at least, not very pretty. I always like to fall in love with actresses in a small way. Alec Potts was restless, and during the intervals he insisted on going to smoke and drink. He also entertained me with anecdotes about his bridge parties with Lady So-and-so, which were not meant for my hearing alone. When we had had tea I shook myself free and walked home. It was pitch dark and there was a frantic wind. It was weird in the park. Though I was quite alone it seemed as if thousands of people . . . unseen . . . were shrieking round me . . . dancing wildly round me . . . pursuing me. I seemed scarce to make any headway. The Knightsbridge Barracks with their lights reminded me of that terrifying story about a town of cats by Blackwood.

31.12.15

Well, I wonder what the New Year will bring? In my opinion it bids fair to

## Twenty Years On

become a more dreadful one even than this unparalleled old year that is dying. The plot of the war is thickening.

I pray that the Allies may this coming Year bring about an honourable peace. Amen.

The diary of 1916, which was destroyed, recorded the happy development of Peter's friendships with Sam, Alister, Bunny and others. Johnnie faded from the picture at last. It was a sad breaking up in December – at eighteen having to face not life but death.

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Now if we turn our attention back a hundred and four years, to the beginning of the Christmas term of 1812, we shall learn from Master Walter Calverly Trevelyan what sort of schooldays *he* had.

Walter was fifteen and a half, and he had been at Harrow just a year.

11.9.1812

Unpacked my box from J. S. which contained the following articles – a good many shells, a calabash, sea eggs, some silk cotton, and some white cotton, a piece of sea fern, some sponge, and several kinds of seeds for necklaces, and some Cashew nuts of which I eat two. Packed up in a box, 2 pair of brass hinges, 2 brass box locks, 2 scuttle-fish, 1 stick of sealing wax, a wax taper, a lead pencil, a ruler, quire of writing paper, bundle of pens, *Triumph of Religion*, a bundle of crow pens, and pamphlet for J. S. and wrote a letter to him.

12.9.1812

Whole holiday without exercise because of the French raising the Siege of Cadiz. Walked round the White Stile field by duck puddle and found bees nest.

Walter was a more modern creature, with his curiosity about scuttle-

fish and bees nests, electricity and gunpowder, than Peter (as we may call the writer of the other diary), for whom the wonders of science had little attraction. These made the difference between Walter's Great War and Peter's. Modern invention brought margarine and the occasional spectacle of an air raid to Harrow, and took a toll of very young Old Harrovians that would have amazed Walter, who could record a substantial military success that cost only two British lives.

22.9.1812

Sent up by Mr. Roberts, 4th School, because I could not construe my Turselline, and flogged by Dr. B. for the first time. After tea walked by the Turnpike and Cricket ground. Had some water and gruel for my cough.

23.9.1812

Supped with Dr. Butler. Eat Mock Turtle Soup, Hare, Partridge, Pye, custard and trifle – and 3 glasses of wine.

So there was no bad blood after the flogging. We do not have to presume that it had hurt Dr. B. more than Walter. The Headmaster was constantly entertaining his pupils to peaches, wine or – as we shall see – gruel.

26.9.1812

$\frac{1}{2}$  Holliday without exercise as it was excused for the taking of Seville.

3.10.1812

$\frac{1}{2}$  Holyday. Exercise excused for trial. Played a trick upon Clive with sympathetic ink. Dr. B. went to Chelsea. Bought a bottle of gingerbeer.

7.10.1812

Made 5 cannons and a blowpipe of 2 pea shooters.

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

3.11.1812

Nicholson was flogged.  $\frac{1}{2}$  Holyday, did Particle. Made 3 squibs: as I was making one I ran the engraver which I rammed it down with right through my finger. After four let off a Catherine Wheel, a Blue light and 2 squibs with Praed. Sat up till  $\frac{1}{2}$  past ten doing punishment for Mr. Roberts.

5.11.1812

After dinner let off my Blue light which did very well.

After 2 walked by Sudbury etc. and found under the bark of a tree a caterpillar's nest. After 4 made 2 squibs let off the cracker and 2 squibs by William's where there was a great many let off. Whole holyday without exercise for 5th November. After church Mr. Roberts returned me an exercise of 38 lines to write it over that he might send it up to Dr. Butler which is first had sent up here.

11.11.1812

Got a new hat, made a squib, bought 2 ounces of gunpowder and a button hook, bought 4 candles,  $\frac{1}{2}$  holyday, exercise excused because of good news from Russia: did Particle for next time.

17.11.1812

Whole Holyday, did 26 verses. Exercise excused for peace with Russia. Gray told me that he would give me a penny every time I hit Dr. B.'s window with throwing a book at it; I hit it 4 times and the 5th broke it. Gray broke Dr. B.'s Pomade divine bottle. Had my study window mended.

Were the results of this day's work dire? Not a bit of it: -

18.11.1812

Dr. B. gave me some of the fruit of the cornel tree. Got a pair of leather gaiters: after last School let off some squibs and crackers.

2 12.1812

After last school went with Praed to Kenton. Dr. B. told me to stay out for my cough and I had some water gruel with him.

As Townsend Warner has observed, 'a delightfully domestic picture; the Headmaster and a fourth form boy supping water gruel together.' It was now December, but term did not end before an incident happened on which Walter must have been able to lunch out with success through the Christmas holidays.

6.12 1812

Went to Church here morning and evening. After last church as I was walking with Praed we were chased by some foot-pads who had before chased Drummond and Chichester but we got away from them.

In 1813, what with 'great news from Spain' and one thing and another, there was an enormous number of whole holidays. The fortnight June 24th-July 8th contained seven, as well as two half holidays, an afternoon absit and a week-end exeat. We still get no introspection. 1814 is notable for Mr. Walker's scientific lectures. As the months pass Walter begins to take a more lively interest in foreign affairs too. But even seeing Platoff's Cossacks smoking hardly brought the great war home to him.

11.5.1814

Mr. Walker came here and gave his first lecture on properties of matter - water hammer - walked in fields.

12.5.1814

$\frac{1}{2}$  holliday, got my watch. Mr. Walker gave his lecture on Mechanicks. Carriage without perch, hindwheels

## Twenty Years On

straight and lower, horses should draw even with axle. Pulley small master 6.

18.5.1814

Went to well and got some iron ore. Mr. W. gave his lecture on chemistry. Cheddar pinks are come up. Walked in Dr. B.'s garden. Harrow water contains chalk and calcareous earth.

8.6.1814

Mr. Walker came here – Electricity – Electrified twice, conductors ought to be pointed – Dr. B. gave us some caviar.

9.6.1814

Mr. W. gave lecture on galvanism and electricity, sheep, frog, at end fire works – electrified twice.

13.6.1814

Whole School day, an auction, illuminations our house Pax, crown and G.R. Lofts windows broke, row of lamps, very good cost about £30. Band, cheered Dr. B. twice. at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11. Went in had supper and negus, clapped Dr. B.'s toasts, went to bed at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 1. Read by light of lamps, looked at Clods dancing in Street till  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2.

19.6.1814

Went to St. George's with Papa. Walked in Park and Kensington Gardens, to Platoff's house, Russians smoking. At about 10 came past Polteney's Hotel saw Emperor etc etc. Got into carriages, – saw Blucher come from a house in Berkely Square.

24 6.1814

Whole holiday Mr. Walker's lecture on Fortification.

29.6.1814

Had subscription for grand inflammation.

30.6.1814

Went in Dr. B.'s garden – had some salsafie dressed. Had inflammation on

top of Well Hill. Very fine, about 15 ft. high, cost £1 1s., smoke fine like Canopy and then a large ring – noise.

Townsend Warner has suggested that the 'Clods' were what modern Harrovians would call Chaws, or Chawbacons, that is Townees. Had the Clods danced too soon after all? Something happened in foreign parts in March, 1815, that even cut across Walter's thoughts of electric shocks and scuttle-fish.

12.3.1815

News of Bonyparte's landing in France.

Three days after the School had reassembled: –

8.4.1815

Whole holliday exercise excused for peace with America – walked with Cumming to the Cricket Ground and thence round the foot of ye hill to know-nothings garden.

15 4.1815

Whitmonday meeting of Anabaptists – a great many people here – a woman broke her leg.

18.5.1815

Battle between Thomas and 3rd form on Cricket ground.

A month later Walter records a more memorable contest.

21.6.1815

News of a great battle fought on 16th and 17th.

26 6.1815

Whole Holliday for Victories.

6.7.1815

Whole holliday. Speech Day. Went to bed last night at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 9 pm. and I

## Two Harrow Diaries 1914-15 : 1812-15

got up at 11 pm. sat in my study till  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 am. NB the birds began to sing at  $\frac{1}{4}$  past 2. Set off at 3 am with Hornby and Preston for Hampstead – walked all about it. Wrote a note to Sir T. Neave with my pencil and left it. met Wilkinson and Molesworth at the Church, returned at  $\frac{1}{4}$  before seven and got back at 9 am. Speeches very full. The D. of Kent came here and Bishop of London.

21.7.1815

said to Dr. B. second school and had verses read over. Prize Bion and Moschus. Taken into the 6th form. 3rd school: did 17 stanzas of lyrics, put conquest of Mexico into the School Library.

22.7.1815

cut out my name in school.

23.7.1815

Mr. Evans preached a sermon for the Waterloo sufferers: collected £107. Did 60 verses for a farewell.

24.7.1815

Most went home as tomorrow is Sts day met Lord N. . . . I was called up last fellow, last school – last time at Harrow, Dr. B. gave me Hosdon's Juvenal for leaving.

So Walter Calverly Trevelyan's time was up. He went to Oxford, and in due course settled down to the life of a country gentleman, succeeding his father as sixth Baronet in 1846. He was twice married, and died at the ripe age of eighty-one. His grandfather was also the ancestor of Sir G. O. Trevelyan, Bart., O.M., father of Sir Charles, Mr. R. C. and Professor G. M. Trevelyan.

It is impressive to read that after Mr. Evans' sermon as much as £107 was collected. Collections in Peter's time were more modest, as he remembers from the occasion when one of them amounted (as the Headmaster gravely gave out) to thirteen pounds, eleven shillings, eightpence, and *five or six small buttons*.

### OVERHEARD

CHARLES LAMB was giving a talk at a mixed gathering and someone hissed. A stunned silence followed. Then Lamb calmly said: 'There are only three things that hiss – a goose, a snake, and a fool. Come forth and be identified.'

WHEN the naturalist Thoreau was near to death, a very pious aunt asked him in deep concern: 'Henry, have you made your peace with God?' 'I didn't know that we had ever quarrelled,' was the reply.

I MAY disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it.—VOLTAIRE.

WHENEVER I hear people discussing birth control, I always remember that I was the fifth.—CLARENCE DARROW.

THE late Uncle Joe Cannon was telling Chauncey M. Depew about a fish he had almost caught. 'About the size of a whale, wasn't it?' asked Mr. Depew softly. 'I was baitin' with whales,' answered Uncle Joe.

# A Study in Two 'I's'

by Michael Sadleir

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SURELY Fate had an ironic hand in the simultaneous publication of the Autobiographies of John Cowper Powys and H. G. Wells?<sup>1</sup>

Here are two male beings, belonging to the same race, and living during the same epoch in – to a large extent – the same country. Both are men of intellectual and literary interest rather than men of action; each, as befits the autobiographer, is concerned to 'fetch a man's mind from his cradle,' and that mind his own; each, in one way or another, has always been a rebel against the conventions and complacences of his time. And yet at no single point can one conceive their minds making contact; while the backgrounds they provide for their lives, the successive preoccupations they describe, the conception each has of his individual purpose as member of a human community, are so utterly diverse, that they might have inhabited different planets or even belonged to different orders of creation. Indeed, the only similarity between the two of them, as expressed in their books, is the topsyturvy similarity that neither is really the sort of person he likes to pretend, and that each, thus pretending, feeds his own pride. Powys would have us

regard him as an almost unique specimen of the abnormal (he prefers the word 'sub-normal', seeing that his technique is an elaborate exercise in self-dispraise). But, in fact, his peculiar sufferings and terrors and weaknesses are much commoner than he seems (or, rather, wishes) to think, while the element in him which is uncommon, is the quality of his imagination. Wells, on the other hand, flies the banner of the 'commonplace' man; his sub-title reads 'Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain.' Yet is Wells' brain very far from ordinary. It is one of the few really exceptional brains of his generation. And he knows it.

Nevertheless, how ever little deceived we may finally be by the masks which these two autobiographers have chosen to assume, we freely admit that they have been well selected. They have the qualities of inspired make-up, and are embellishments of nature so skilfully judged and carried out, that by their very distortions they emphasize essential truth and keep non-essentials in the background.

There have been various avowed impulses to the writing of autobiography, but among men of letters three remain the most prominent. Of these the first is best represented by Rous-

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography* by J. C. Powys. Lane 15s ; *Experiment in Autobiography* by H. G. Wells. 2 vols. Gollancz and Cresset Press, 10s. 6d. each.

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seau, who thus summarizes his Confessions:—

‘I have shown myself as I was; contemptible and vile when I was so; good, generous, sublime when I was so; I have unveiled my interior such as Thou Thyself hast seen it, Eternal Father! Collect about me the innumerable swarm of my fellows; let them hear my confessions; let them groan at my unworthiness, let them blush at my meannesses! Let each of them discover his heart in his turn at the foot of Thy throne with the same sincerity and then let any one of them tell Thee if he dare: “I was a better man ”’

Minor figures in the Rousseau tradition are Sir Egerton Brydges and Haydon the painter. The former declares himself ‘fully aware of my own morbid sensitiveness’; and, through two volumes of self-pity, adopts a declared policy: ‘I will follow no chronological order. I do not offer a regular account of a life which has been principally spent in studious seclusion, but merely a register of detached thoughts, sentiments, observations, characters and events.’ Haydon, in a mood of savage grievance against the world, wrote because he believed that ‘every man who has suffered for a principle, who has incurred the hatred of his enemies in proportion as they became convinced they were wrong, should write his own life.’

The second school of literary autobiography is concerned with selective auto-criticism. Goethe, Chateaubriand, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt are all representatives of this school; and so also – with a characteristic readiness to admit his own liability to egoism and an equally

characteristic insistence on forthright honesty – is Anthony Trollope.

‘In writing these pages,’ he says, ‘which, for want of a better name I shall be fain to call the autobiography of so insignificant a person as myself, it will not be so much my intention to speak of the little details of my private life as of what I, and perhaps others around me, have done in literature . . . And yet the garrulity of old age and the aptitude of any man’s mind to recur to the passages of his own life will, I know, tempt me to say something of myself. . . . That I, or any man, should tell everything of himself I hold to be impossible. Who could endure to own the doing of a mean thing? Who is there that has done none? But this I protest – that nothing that I say shall be untrue. I will set down naught in malice; nor will I give myself, or others, credit which I do not believe to have been fairly won.’

And thirdly comes what may be termed the public-spirited autobiography – a grave and self-withdrawing affair, designed to encourage thought on some general issue, to demonstrate the effect (bad or good) on one individual mind, of an existing system of education or a phase of social uncertainty. Thus, for example, John Stuart Mill:—

‘It seems proper that I should prefix to the following biographical sketch some mention of the reasons which have made me think it desirable that I should leave behind such a memorial of so uneventful a life as mine. I do not for a moment imagine that what I have to relate can be interesting to the public as a narrative or as being connected with myself. But I have thought that in an age in which education and its improvement are the subject of more study than at any former

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period of English history, it may be useful that there should be some record of an education which was unusual and remarkable . . .

'It has also seemed to me that, in an age of transition in opinions, there may be somewhat both of interest and of benefit in noting the successive phases of any mind, which was always pressing forward, equally ready to learn and to unlearn either from its own thoughts or from those of others. But the motive which weighs with me more than either of these is a desire to make acknowledgement of the debts which my intellectual and moral development owes to other persons.'

To the same tradition belongs also that enthralling and still too little known American work, *The Education of Henry Adams* – a work avowedly written in a spirit opposite to that of Rousseau, and thrown into third-person form on purpose to obscure the ego and to make use of the central figure as 'a manikin on which the toilet of education is to be draped to show fit or misfit.'

Of the two books under review, that by Wells possesses qualities gathered from all three of these main types of autobiography, though it approximates much less to the first than to the second and third. Powys, on the other hand, is almost entirely a disciple of Rousseau, only straying into auto-criticism here and there, the more vividly to display those peculiar aspects of his mind and nature which obsess him. At the very outset, therefore, it is obvious that there must be this great contrast at any rate between Powys and Wells – that whereas the latter is perpetually and buoyantly a member of a community, forever seeing himself as a man of his time, forever criticizing

institutions, urging reforms, forecasting and seeking to mould the future; the former lives with himself and for himself, indifferent to public happening, wholly and absolutely ego-centric. It should be added that the origins and circumstances of the two men have greatly influenced their development *vis-à-vis* their fellows. Wells was born into poverty, and had to secure not only his own economic survival but that of others. He came early to grips with the world; and by the time he had wrested from it a livelihood, he knew it for a turmoil of misery, stupidity, kindness, and (his own favourite word) frustration. Not surprisingly, he came to regard it as part of a man's duty, first to stand on his own legs and then, so far as possible, to relieve the misery, lighten the stupidity, reward the kindness and remove the frustration of others. Powys, on the other hand, is of the upper middle class and his father (or so one assumes) was a man of some means. For throughout his autobiography he shows himself content, wherever possible, to live at others' expense, and even boasts that he has never taken the least interest in his own career and very rarely an interest in those of his neighbours.

Egoism is, of course, the inevitable basis of any autobiography, and to attack an autobiographer for interest in himself is in the ordinary way an absurdity. As Wells says at the beginning of his second volume:—

'If you do not want to explore an egoism you should not read autobiography. If I did not take an immense interest in life through the medium of myself, I should not have embarked upon this analysis of memories and records. . . .



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The reader's *rôle*, the prospect of publication, are kept in view chiefly to steady and control these operations by the pervading sense of the critical observer.'

But this commonsensical statement of the autobiographer's mental process is hardly within shouting distance of the exaggerated self-absorption of John Cowper Powys. His apologia, if he ever made one, would read as a travesty of the Wellsian sentence just quoted. He takes an immense interest in himself, but only occasionally a little interest in life, when life may happen to serve as a medium to more detailed revelation of self. The reader's *rôle* and the prospect of publication have certainly not been kept in view to steady or to control his pen; for every chance of provoking the 'critical observer' is eagerly taken, and one concludes that the prospect of an audience has merely stimulated the writer's desire to violate one more accepted privacy, to go one step farther in self-exposure. As will be seen, there is a motive in this deliberate embarrassment of possible readers – a motive pathetic rather than discreditable. But my present concern is procedure rather than motive; and certainly the Rousseau school of autobiography can claim no more faithful follower than Powys, who, like the Master, shows himself contemptible and vile when he was so; who does not hesitate to expose his interior; who, like Brydges, declares against chronology and, fully aware of his own morbid sensitiveness, offers an immense register of detached thoughts, sentiments and events; who, like Haydon, is more eagerly conscious of his enemies than of his friends.

Let it forthwith be admitted that the first reaction of the average reader of Powys' autobiography is a feeling of repugnance – a feeling which deepens in proportion to his previous acquaintance with the author's work. Indeed, it is almost heart-breaking, to anyone who was deeply moved by the beauty and anguish of *Wolf Solent*, to find to what an extent in this autobiography Powys has written *Wolf Solent* all over again, and in the process degraded it. Worse still, he has degraded it on purpose. It is as though he knew that many readers of that novel pitied Wolf; sympathized with his dilemma between Christie, the ideal wraith-girl, and Gerda the lovely female animal; marvelled at the power of imaginative projection which created the characters of Wolf's mother, of Squire Urquhart, of Miss Gault, of half a dozen more. It is as though, knowing all this, he was determined to destroy that pity and sympathy; to reject all credit for a power to lose himself in others; to be known henceforward for a man whose only study is himself, and one who undertakes that study with a weary but meticulous disgust. In consequence, like Jekyll turning to Hyde on the film, the characters of *Wolf Solent* transferred to the *Autobiography* change as we look at them, the sinister becoming merely sordid, the tortured and perplexed becoming mean and miserable.

And yet as one reads on, one realizes that not all of *Wolf Solent* has been evilly transformed, and slowly the shadows of repugnance pale as the old wonder dawns again. As reagent to every flicker of beauty, Powys is so sensitive as to be an almost matchless example of æsthetic perceptivity; and

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in the *Autobiography* his painting of nature, his subtle response to colour, phrase and odd fragments of normality are as serene and beautiful as in *Wolf Solent*. The tribute to the cuckoo-flower, the description of Trent Lanes; the sensuous pleasure which twice quotes Pater's lovely reference to 'melancholy seignorial woods;' the view from the little up-state house under the New York hills; the delight in railway journeys; the analysis of the American man and woman; the deep, perceptive sympathy with the Negro race – these are the Powys who (if only he will himself permit it) must always be remembered.

What a jumble the man is! On the one hand, a brilliant reader of group character and an instinctive champion of solitary unhappiness; on the other, humourless, malicious, rather cruel, often silly, always desperately vain – he baffles any outside attempt at analysis as surely as he baffles his own. For though he would have us accept him as he is here pictured, we know that the portrait is only what he, looking outwards, wishes to present, that it is not at all what we, looking inwards, really see. Edmund Blunden once wrote two sentences about Benjamin Haydon's autobiography which are strangely to our present point: 'From Haydon himself we have heard all about Haydon's inwardness; now perhaps someone will set forth the man from outside observation. For not the least remarkable thing about this tragic human plaything of a renaissance was the intermittent magic with which he impressed other men.' Read 'Powys' for 'Haydon' and the words can stand.

It must now be obvious that Powys' autobiography (whether one likes or dislikes it) is a very remarkable book, and its author – though not necessarily in the way that he himself believes – a very remarkable man. Indeed (as incidentally he claims for himself) he possesses more than a streak of the quality of genius; and however loth one may be to use that sadly discredited word, it is impossible to avoid using it of him. His inability (or unwillingness) to discipline his own writing, and his love of self-torment are – no less than 'the intermittent magic' which only obstinate hostility can deny to his work – characteristics of genius, and as such are gladly forgiven.

But side by side with shortcomings proper to nobility of mind, go unworthinesses of a very different kind. There is a smallness about Powys' vanity, a spitefulness in many of his judgments, a falseness in the texture of his masochism, which one cannot but regret. He tells us again and again that he has always been malicious; and though he invites us to blame him for this failing, it is evident that secretly he glories in it. He wants to be regarded as a creature doomed to be rejected by the world at large, because he lacks those qualities of courage, self-discipline, kindliness, social proficiency and ambition which the world is accustomed to admire. But in fact, he so despises the great majority of his fellows that to be odd-man-out in their company is what he most desires. He tells us himself that he enjoys 'displaying all my ignorance and simplicities in the presence of people who are proud of their knowledge of the world,'

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which is tantamount to saying that the ignorance and simplicity are deliberate affectations.

Another affectation – even more naïvely betrayed by this book – is a pretended inability to remember such mundane things as dates. ‘I am so bad at dates that I forget the exact year, etc.’; yet not long afterwards, and on three separate occasions, he shows a perfectly accurate memory of precisely the year in question. Then there are passages of sheer rhetorical pretentiousness which one can hardly believe to have been written by the same hand as other passages – lovely, cadenced, or deeply felt. The rather ‘ninetyish’ vignette of Lily, the little prostitute; the glimpse of old Mrs. Curme who kept his house; the fine outburst against the Sherborne bully – these and other sections of the autobiography would give distinction to any book. But side by side with them are pieces of sheer rhodomontade, such as the rhapsody over Rome; the occasional parade of artistic appreciation (combined with regular misspelling of other artists’ names); and the silly-solemn account of the daily round in his remote American home. Similarly phrases of melodious power – for example ‘eyes at once secretive and blazing like the eyes of a long dis-crowned king’ – alternate with glib references to ‘Rabelaisian zest for life,’ and even with so pitiable a cliché as ‘illicit loves,’ applied to his persistent and unhappy experiments in search of sexual fulfilment. In short, it is at times impossible not to sympathize with his brother, Llewellyn Powys, who has charged him with ‘spiritual insincerity’, or with his friend Louis

Wilkinson ‘who cannot resist giving way, when he deals with my character and even with my facial expression, to that particular irritation which we all feel in the presence of what strikes us as affectation.’

But despite all his crudity and ostentation, and although parts of his book goad the reader almost to fury and other parts bore almost to extinction, only very callow or very hasty critics will deny its impressiveness or the power of the mind behind it. There is, as has been said, a motive in Powys’ policy of provocation and a motive no less ego-centric than the writing it has produced. He *wants* to infuriate others, in order the more thoroughly to mortify himself. He is an anchorite, whose hair-shirt and scourge are none the less expiatory for being pantheistic. He indulges continually in spiritual flagellation; and all his talk of ‘sadism’ and ‘erotic manias’ is the inverted asceticism of a puritan who has rejected his traditional puritanism but acquired nothing in its place. Thrown in on himself, and alternately exalted and revolted by what he finds within himself, he cannot escape from the obsession, either of his own potentialities or of the weaknesses which thwart them. So in order to release the former, he seeks to macerate the latter by inviting the world to witness them, to jeer at them and to hate them. It is for this reason that we are compelled to share his visits to the lavatory, his attempts to peer beneath the petticoats of girls on Brighton beach, his frenzied reading of boulevard pornography, even his pitiable physical sufferings from ulcers in the stomach. We do not enjoy these

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experiences; indeed we may actively resent them. But to blame our resentment on Powys is to misapprehend at once his spiritual state and the purpose of his book. We can – and should – criticize him for his failure to distinguish between truth and falsehood, between sincerity and affectation, between the essential and the non-essential in self-revelation. We may, if we wish, charge him with grossly exaggerating his own frailty, with deceiving himself as to the uniqueness of his case, with tediously overpraising his brothers while markedly ignoring both his mother and his wife. But to find fault with one who is seeking to heal himself, because in the process he does not always amuse or edify us, is mere irrelevance. We have our remedy; we need not read his book. But in that case we shall deny ourselves many moments of magical exhilaration, many glimpses of astounding beauty; and there are not so many of these in the literature of any period, that, when they show themselves in a book of our own time, they can be lightly ignored.

It is an astonishing experience to turn from the tormented exhibitionism and pretended abasements which are the autolatry of John Cowper Powys to the bustle, pertinacity and resilient humour of H. G. Wells. Mere comparison of the frontispieces chosen to illustrate the two 'confessions' will show the distance to be travelled. Powys selects a portrait in sanguine – carefully posed, purposely haggard and withdrawn; Wells, in ordinary photograph, appears plump, smiling, neighbourly. We have left the cave in the wilderness, where the solitary hermit

gloats over his sins and lashes himself to sensual ecstasy with thongs of his own contriving, and are pushing our way through crowded streets, guided by a vivid, loquacious little man who points out this to right and that to left, who pours out ideas and memories and exhortations with such charm, eloquence and unflagging zeal, that we ask nothing better than to follow him for ever – at times breathless, but always engrossed.

With his very first paragraphs Wells sets the pace of these two volumes of life-story. Right off the mark he goes – conversational, mischievous, sometimes petulant, using words with the rapidity of improvisation but with the accuracy which only comes with long and painful practice. Throughout he adopts a pose of humorous self-depreciation. He tells of his discomfitures; shows himself at times out-argued, embarrassed, even ridiculous. Never can so vital a history have been deliberately presented with such casual off-handedness.

Some of his critics have already denounced this modesty as super-vanity; and certainly there is no lack of fundamental egoism in this extraordinary record of achievement and prophecy. As has been said, Wells fancies the rôle of 'ordinary man,' yet knows quite well that he is not an ordinary man at all. But how should he not know? He is one of the two or three living Englishmen who have been a direct influence on national life during the last three decades. That society and ideas and education and even discontent are what they are to-day is very largely due to Wells. What he has foreseen has overwhelmingly come

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to pass; what he now urges us to do, either will be done or will not be needed, because catastrophe will have put our world beyond the reach of remedy. Shall a man have fashioned an epoch to the extent that Wells has done, and not realize the fact? Realizing it, shall he not be proud to give himself the credit? Let those who can claim to have served the community as long and as brilliantly as he, cast stones at him for self-complacency; others will use their stones more sensibly, and build of them a monument to Wells, Citizen of the World.

Not the least remarkable quality of Wells' Autobiography is the amount of personal narrative which he has managed to retain. One might expect that a man of his wide interests, fertility of brain and miscellaneous involvements would have been tempted to give most of his space to disquisitions on themes of general public importance, and to offer his individual experiences in hasty summary. And he might have inclined the more toward this, because he has already used in many of his novels scenes and characters from his past life. But he has chosen the opposite method. The book is primarily a straightforward story of a life – childhood, portraits of parents and others, early struggles for survival, first marriage, more struggles, second marriage, the beginnings of authorship, success and more success and still more success. Generalized discussion is kept carefully subordinate to the tale of personal adventure. The result is a book of extraordinary readability, which goes so gaily and vigorously on its way, that one ought, properly

speaking, to pause now and again and remind oneself of the skill and the labour which have gone to its making.

The affinity of Wells' style of autobiography to the auto-critical manner of Trollope and to the didactic, impersonal manner of Mill and Henry Adams can be simply indicated. His 'Trollopianism' is of an impish variety, but, for two-thirds of the way, genuine enough. The impishness corresponds to Trollope's bluntness and had, probably, a similar origin. A poverty-stricken childhood and years of desperate struggle with a world which treated him as a drudge and an inferior, produced in each a definite and defensive style. With Trollope, this was a blunt directness which served to disguise an inner shrinking; with Wells, it is a wry turn of phrase – part sarcastic, part humorously deprecating – which must in its time have cloaked many uncertainties and humiliations.

As students of themselves the two men are also closely parallel. Wells confronts himself as though he were a character destined for a novel, makes an estimate of himself – with a complete lack either of sentimentality or high falutin – and puts down the result in simple terms. He has written his book to place himself and his achievements in life and letters where, in his opinion, they belong. That is self-appraisal of the Trollopian kind; and although Wells' book is more manifold, more mercurial and more quick-minded than anything Trollope could ever have written, the two men have, up to this point, many spiritual qualities in common.

However, over the final third of Trollope's statement of aim, he and

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Wells diverge. This is not to say that the latter's book is untruthful or dishonest; but rather that its method approximates much more nearly to the skilful re-focussing of past events characteristic of *The Education of Henry Adams* than to the scrupulous literalness of the author of *Barchester Towers*. One has a suspicion that many of the encounters and clashes of temperament so dashing and so convincingly described were not, at the time, quite so rhythmically coherent – quite, one might say, so 'easy to parse' – as they now appear. Even Powys – for all his distorted ideas of self, for all his inverted, neuropathic vanity – has undeniably struggled to put down exactly the part he played at any given moment in his life, and has never adjusted his memories in the interests of deftness or humour. There are occasions in Wells' narrative when one does not feel so sure.

And if his approximation to Henry Adams is to this extent definite, his affiliation to J. S. Mill is even more striking, even though it be one of spirit rather than of design. Not only does Mill's description of his own mind – 'always pressing forward, equally ready to learn and to unlearn from its own thoughts or from those of others' – apply perfectly to Wells' mind also, but education is the dominant interest of both men and the improvement of education their most passionate desire. When, therefore, Wells insists on his own 'ordinariness', it is only a little because it pleases him to be mischievous, and mainly because he wants to show what so-called education *might* have done to stultify and to destroy the powers of a lad in his position, what

self-contrived education actually *did*, and what it has made of him.

These two processes – the almost-submerging of young Bertie Wells by economic stress, bad housing, sickness, shop-slavery and discouragement; the quite-establishing of H. G. Wells by dogged work, flashes of good fortune, the intermittent friendliness of others and his own inexhaustible mental energy – are the subject of the first volume of his book. It is a volume of quite absorbing interest – crowded with living portraits, continually humorous, full of a sort of genial mockery of all manner of funny old people and funny old conventions, and with occasional outbursts of real hatred against individuals or against representatives of creeds, who – usually from stupidity rather than from malice – thwart the possibilities of helpless humanity. These outbursts are the more devastating for their restraint; for no one knows better than Wells how to put savagery into a mere chirrup. Among institutions, royalty, the Catholic and the Anglican Churches, and the Imperial College of Science and Technology are the principal victims; of creeds Marxism (with emphasis on its prophet), Fabianism, and other cults which seem to Wells merely to substitute one idolatry for another, are duly attacked and rent. And then, presumably to make sure that his contemptuous strictures shall really rouse his enemies to fury, he flings, with cheerful impertinence, a disarming taunt at himself: 'My very obstinate self-conceit was an important factor in my survival. I am a typical Cockney, without either reverence or a sincere conviction of inferiority to any fellow creature.'

## Michael Sadleir

It cannot be denied that Wells' second volume is – perhaps inevitably – less completely satisfying than his first. True, it contains the major part of the story of his second marriage – a story told partly in words, partly in his own comic little drawings (which are largely cheated of their effect by being over-reduced) – and surely one of the most charming records of the kind ever compiled. True, it is peppered with brilliant pen-portraits of various contemporaries – Frank Harris, Gissing, Conrad, Bennett, Haldane and, right at the end, Franklin Roosevelt, Stalin and Gorky. True, it covers the period when Wells' most bitterly resented books were being published, and retorts with characteristic flippancy to the pompous absurdities of their enemies. But for all its tenderness and perspicacity and vigour, it does not read quite so solidly as its predecessor. Doubtless the reason is one familiar to all writers of reminiscence – that (as it were) the nearer one gets the fewer. Doubtless there are discretions, which even Wells – who fears neither himself nor others – has felt bound to observe.

Any further attempt to summarize the contents or indicate the quality of a work as rich as this autobiography of H. G. Wells would be idle. Everyone who can possibly contrive to read it for

himself will, of course, do so. It is to be feared that the same cannot be said of the life-story of the unhappy Powys; and yet it is he, rather than Wells, who stands in need of sympathetic readers.

So to the last these two men and their books stand in topsy-turvy relation, one to the other. It is not Powys, the misfit, but Wells, the world-famous, who speaks so persistently of frustration. That is because no man is frustrated save he who wants to achieve, no man is baulked save he who wants to climb on and upward. Wells has always been (and is still) agog to achieve, has no sooner arrived (or failed to arrive) at one summit than he is off again toward another. But Powys takes his universe about with him. Where he is, there is the desired goal. How then shall he be frustrated? By lack of what he most desires—an audience. He longs for the world to come to him; but does not know how to tempt it. Wells, to whom the world is stale news, cries out for freedom of mind, peace for work, release from entanglements. But his very cry will bring less freedom, less peace, more entanglements; for he cannot write anything without provoking fierce admiration or fierce hostility, nor refrain, when they have been provoked, from acknowledging the former and giving the latter as good again.

# Thersites

## by R. C. Trevelyan

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*The Scene is featureless. It is in the  
Limbo of Poetical Concepts, a  
'place of thought'.*

THERSITES *is discovered, alone, in  
meditation. Enter to him*  
CRESSIDA.

CRESSIDA. Thersites! Will you please to wake up. I want to have a talk with you.

THERSITES. Why do you disturb me? I have no time now for talking.

CRESSIDA. No time! – when we have the whole of eternity on our hands!

THERSITES. Have we? That is just the problem. Pray leave me alone to think it out.

CRESSIDA. Yes, dear Thersites; I know you have become a philosopher of late. That is the reason why I want to talk with you. None of the others can ever be really serious. They gossip, quarrel, make love, and want me to do the same – always the same as in the old days. Oh, how weary I am of their company, and of my own too! But you are quite different from them. It is to you alone I can turn for help in my difficulties, for no one else will have the intelligence to understand them.

THERSITES. Your difficulties! Have Troilus and Diomed been quarrelling about you again? Or have you perhaps been making love to Achilles or Paris? Go to your bawdy old uncle

Pandar: he will advise you upon your difficulties far better than I can.

CRESSIDA. No, no. I should not come to *you* for advice about such trifles. Thersites, I wish to talk with you about myself – about my soul.

THERSITES. Your soul! When did you come to possess a soul? Shakespeare never gave you one, nor Chaucer, nor Boccaccio, so far as I am aware.

CRESSIDA. Well then, my character – my personality.

THERSITES. The character they gave you was nothing much to boast of.

CRESSIDA. Perhaps not. . . . But I want you to help me to think more clearly about myself, and about my relation to the real world.

THERSITES. None of us are supposed to have any relation at all with the vulgar phenomenal world of time. We are nothing but unreal, timeless figments of the poetic imagination. Such at least is the orthodox theory.

CRESSIDA. But is it the true one?

THERSITES. That is another matter.

CRESSIDA. Do we merely exist in, and for, that detestable, libellous comedy? That surely cannot be the whole truth, because I at least have another more beautiful, though fainter, existence in Chaucer's poetry, and others, fainter still, in Boccaccio's and



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Guido's. Why then may I not some day have yet other existences, more beautiful and more vivid, in yet other creations of the poetic genius?

THERSITES. That is not impossible, no doubt, though most unlikely. But your grievance against Shakespeare for his treatment of us seems to me unreasonable. For my part, I am well content with the personality he gave me. I have been able to develop its latent possibilities; and, as you have remarked, I have even taken to philosophizing of late.

CRESSIDA. So much the better; for then you can help me to solve the problems that are worrying me.

THERSITES. Well, what are your problems?

CRESSIDA. First of all, what kind of being is this dreary half-life of ours? Are we indeed no more than the timeless immutable puppets of a poet's fantasy, created solely for the purpose of his poem, with no real existence outside it? Or, once created, have we some kind of independent life of our own? And if so, what are its limits and its nature?

THERSITES. Let me ask you a question myself. In Shakespeare's play, or in Chaucer's poem, were you ever troubled by such problems as these?

CRESSIDA. No, not so far as I can remember.

THERSITES. Then to that extent, it would seem, you are not entirely the same now as you then were.

CRESSIDA. It would seem so. . . . And yet, that would be absurd.

THERSITES. Why absurd?

CRESSIDA. Because, being mere dramatic figments, how is it possible that we should develop independently?

THERSITES. Yet here we are philosophizing with a profundity that Chaucer, and even Shakespeare, were quite incapable of. But let us consider the dilemma more carefully. Our fellow phantom Hamlet, who like myself is something of a philosopher, has lately been complaining to me that his character, his personality, and what he now calls his psychology, are continually being re-interpreted, and misinterpreted, in the most fantastic manner by modern critics and stage-players. Whatever he may once have been in Shakespeare's mind, he says that he is now a more or less different person in each one of countless myriads of imaginations. How then can we consider Hamlet to be a mere figment of what was once Shakespeare's mind, or even an immutable element of the drama, as originally conceived by him? For the play too, as well as the characters, has been subject to change and growth in the minds of innumerable readers and play-goers.

CRESSIDA. If that be so, then I suppose it must be the same with you, and with me, and with uncle Pandar, and all the rest of us.

THERSITES. Assuredly. Only, since the world has always been more interested in Hamlet than in us, the enrichment and multiplication of his personality has proceeded a great deal further and more rapidly than ours. But all of us, from that beef-witted fool Ajax upwards, have in some degree suffered change. Permit me to take my own case first. So far as I am aware, Homer, whoever Homer may have been, was my original progenitor. One speech alone did he allow me; and an admirable speech it was. In

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hexameters as dignified and sonorous as any spoken by Achilles or Priam, I withstood Agamemnon, the King of men, reviling him to his face for his inordinate avarice and vain glory, and calling on the Achaians to return home in their ships, and leave him there alone before Troy to gorge himself with meeds of honour. It was a courageous and noble utterance, that in these modern days would have won the applause of every peace-loving democrat. And so no doubt it did then; but Homer, who never forgot that he was writing for aristocratic patrons, set on that clever ruffian Ulysses to ridicule and insult me, and smite me with his golden sceptre – me the first recorded champion and tribune of the people. Yet though Homer treated me so unjustly, I make no complaint. My bold words remain immortal, and adorn his Iliad with at least one brief gleam of political common sense. Thus from my very birth I was superior in moral courage and intellect to his vulgar crowd of kings and fighting men; and so, when centuries later Shakespeare became interested in me, he at once perceived my value and appreciated my boundless possibilities. A poor affair indeed would his play have been without me, a mere fatuous assemblage of rogues and fools, lovers and madmen. But with me as their satirical critic and prose chorus (for but two lines of verse did he put into my mouth, and those bawdy ones), he was able to give infinite meaning to their sordid story, which else would have been well-nigh barren of significance.

CRESSIDA. No, Thersites; in those days, far from being a philosopher,

you were no better than a scurrilous ribald cynic, a 'damnable box of envy,' as Patroclus very justly called you.

THERSITES. Aye, and a 'whoreson indistinguishable cur,' as that 'full dish of fool' said truly. Doubtless I was all that, and worse. And yet I had the root of wisdom in me, or at least the seed. Beneath my unsightly Satyr's mask, there was lying hid an embryo Socrates, who has since been born. It is the mystery of his birth that is perplexing me now.

CRESSIDA. Can you then find no solution?

THERSITES. I have indeed a theory; but I doubt that you will have the intellect to understand it.

CRESSIDA. Try at least to explain it to me.

THERSITES. It is something of this kind. When a poet sets about creating a character, he does not, if he is wise, merely imitate some existing and familiar personage; nor does he build up an artificial figure by a deliberate process of reasoning. He calls intuition into play, and in fact does not so much create as discover what already existed within his own mind, and in the minds of his fellow-men; and to this he gives life and form. If he is fortunate, he will have discovered and revealed one of those permanent ideal archetypes, which the human intelligence has obscurely divined and fitfully groped for ever since it emerged from the unconsciousness of instinct. His conception, and the form in which he presents it, will indeed be conditioned and circumscribed by the necessities of his poem, and by the limits of his imagination. But its value and

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efficacy will depend altogether upon the recognition it arouses in the minds of other men. Thus before Shakespeare wrote, Hamlet was; and long before Homer's inadequate characterization, or rather caricature of me, I, Thersites, the bold, shameless, truth-speaking, rebellious, railing intelligence, had been growing through feeble unconscious infancy towards mature strength and self-awareness within the common experience of man's race. I make no claim to be an absolute, eternal entity, because I am subject to change and growth, like the human mind, from which I emanate. Yet I am no mere creature of a poet's private and casual invention, no vulgar stage-puppet, but an autonomous primal archetype, and as such, far more real than the shadowy Thersites of epic and comedy, aye, and more real than ever were Homer or Shakespeare themselves.

CRESSIDA. My wonderful Thersites, I am amazed and delighted by your eloquence: yet I do not easily understand all its meaning. Some of your grand words, such as *entity* and *autonomous archetype*, are unfamiliar to me. I cannot remember to have heard them at Troy, or in the Grecian camp.

THERSITES. Perhaps not. Yet if, since then, you had not misspent your eternal youth gossiping with Helen and your uncle Pandar, but had consorted at times, as I have done, with philosophers, such as Plato's Socrates, and Goethe's Faust, you would now be able to understand me well enough.

CRESSIDA. All the same, in part, I think I have understood. Yet it seems to me that, though your theory

explains much, it does not altogether explain what you called the mystery of the birth of Socrates from within your Satyr's mask. For that birth has taken place since Shakespeare gave you your last embodiment. And yet, so far as I am aware, no poet since him has ever shown the least interest in you. How then can this development have taken place, unless you have powers of growth that are independent of the human minds that have engendered us? And that, I still maintain, would be absurd.

THERSITES. I feared you would not understand me. I said, you will remember, that a poet did not so much create his characters, as discover them already existing in men's minds. And of these archetypes, as I called them, he will not reveal the whole, because he will only see them in part, or at least will need no more than a part for his immediate artistic purpose. Thus it was that neither Homer nor Shakespeare discerned in me the sage and moralist that was latent beneath my ribald free-speaking; and if they had, they would have found no use for him. This Socratic aspect of my personality, which they ignored, but which was there from the beginning, is now developing and revealing itself without their aid.

CRESSIDA. But how? But how? Without human aid we cannot grow or change.

THERSITES. That may be true, in a sense. Yet, as I have said, it is not only in the irresponsible dreams of poets that we archetypal personalities exist, but as inherited ideals emanating from the universal experience of myriads of men. If therefore we find

## Thersites

ourselves changing, the cause must be some parallel change in the human soil wherein we are rooted.

CRESSIDA. But would that be enough? Even if it were true that men have grown sager and more philosophic, how should that affect us, miserable half-forgotten undeveloped archetypes that we are?

THERSITES. Indeed, I doubt if men are any less foolish to-day than they have always been.

CRESSIDA. If that be so, then what becomes of your theory? . . . Unless indeed some living poet should have been busying himself with us again.

THERSITES. The Gods forbend!

CRESSIDA. And yet in that case we should surely have been aware of it by this time. It was no secret to Helen, when Goethe began to remodel her for the second part of his Faust. She had long enough to wait, nearly thirty years, before his new portrait of her was finished and given to the world: and then, poor dear, what a disappointment she found it!—a wretched, passionless, allegorical abstraction, inferior in every way to Homer's living and breathing reality. Ulysses too was complaining to me the other day that he has been outrageously travestied by some barbarian writer of ridiculous prose romances.

THERSITES. He has little cause for complaint; for the fellow has done no more than make use of his name, and has left his story and personality alone. He might just as appropriately have called his shameless monster of a book *Thersites* as *Ulysses*. But we and our likes are out of fashion with these modernists: and a good thing

too. They will find fools and rogues and whores in plenty among their own folk, with whom to people their dreary novels and dramas, without meddling with their betters. I at least have no wish to be modernized and devitalized by some incompetent young dadaistic futilitarian ass, with a brain like a putrefying cabbage. Shakespeare is good enough for me. I will bide my time contentedly till better days.

CRESSIDA. Why this heat, Thersites? For my part, I have a better opinion of the younger generation, and would be glad enough if one of them would take it into his head to modernize Troilus and me. Chaucerian and Shakespearian fashions have grown a little out of date nowadays; and, I confess, I am ready for a change, even were it from poetry to prose and naturalism. But I fancy that the fate you so dread must be about to overtake you, and that some living author is even now meddling with your personality—and with mine too, as I begin to hope. How else can you account for this strange alteration which you admit to be taking place in us?

THERSITES. Now may Momus, controller of fools, defend me from such a calamity!

(A POET enters.)

POET. Pardon me for intruding upon so momentous a discussion . . .

THERSITES. Who may this be?—Sir, what business brings you here, eavesdropping?

POET. I am, I will confess, none other than the audacious poet whom you rightly divined to have been interesting himself in your personalities.

THERSITES. Then get you gone without more words to your miserable

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world of time and phenomena. We want none of your scribbling tribe here.

CRESSIDA. Thersites, you really should make an effort to be more civil. After all, you must admit that we owe something to poets – everything indeed.

POET. Very true, Lady. And I would remind our friend that his recent philosophical development is entirely due to my good offices. So it would be most imprudent of him to quarrel with me – not indeed that I have the least intention of taking offence at his vocabulary.

THERSITES. You mealy-mouthed poetastical mountebank, begone at once, I tell you, back to your publishers, and leave us in peace.

POET. My good Sir, you must excuse me. Now that I have at last found you, I mean to make the best use I can of my good luck.

THERSITES. (*Rising.*) This is too much. Cressida, you must do as you choose; but I shall stay here no longer to be insulted by this insufferable coxcomb.

POET. It is no use, Thersites. Do what you may, you cannot escape me now. Though you flee to the uttermost boundaries of this limbo of poetical concepts, yet there shall I be with you. Nay, you cannot depart from me one step, unless I choose. Henceforth you are mine, a product and portion of my imagination; and no more can you move or have being apart from me than may the spoke of a wheel apart from the nave whence it radiates, though it turn and travel never so furiously.

THERSITES. Oh preposterous in-

version of the truth! What! we but the spokes, and you the hub – you contemptible speck of human dung picked up by an outer tyre of the Muse's chariot-wheels when she had lost her way in some condemned slum of literature! You mere flickering phantom of a mind! intrude no longer upon this commonwealth of real and timeless beings. Go back to your vile body and rot there with it, till you both perish together.

CRESSIDA. You should pay no heed to his explosions, Sir. For all his intelligence, I fear he will never learn good manners.

POET. Good manners! That is the last thing I should wish him to learn. Thersites, I hope you will reconsider your over-hasty refusal. I can promise that you will find in our modern world the most unlimited scope for your superb talent for railing, which I am glad to see is as vigorous as ever, enriched as it will now be by your new-born philosophical turn of mind. Indeed, your co-operation is almost indispensable to my scheme. It would be very unfortunate if I had to fall back upon Timon or Diogenes, or some such stock classical curmudgeon. Yours will be the principal part, if you choose to make it so. I shall allow you unrestrained freedom both of thought and speech. You will only have to be your own natural inimitable self, and I have no fears as to the result.

CRESSIDA. Now that he has made his protest, you may be sure that Thersites will be only too eager to come. For my part, I shall indeed be proud to be given new life and introduced to the modern world by you.

## Thersites

That has long been my dearest ambition. But I hope you will not forget to bring my poor dear Troilus back with you, and Diomed too, and uncle Pandar, and the rest. Let me go now and fetch them all here.

POET. Wait a moment. I have not yet made up my mind how many of you I shall require – not all, I fear – though certainly both of you two.

CRESSIDA. Oh, but you *must* take Troilus. I really could not come without Troilus. Besides, he speaks verse so beautifully. Thersites and uncle Pandar never speak anything but prose, for they are museless souls. But Troilus and I have both of us a delightful talent for verse. You may be sure we shall not disappoint you.

POET. Yes, of course, Troilus must come. But the fact is, dear lady, I must warn you that blank verse is not altogether in vogue nowadays. . . .

CRESSIDA. But, my good poet, surely we ought to be above these senseless ephemeral fashions. Of course, if necessary, I can speak as good prose as anyone: but my character is essentially poetical – lyrical indeed. Listen to this now: –

If I prove false, or swerve a hair from truth,  
When time is old and hath forgot itself,  
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,  
And mighty states characterless are grated  
To dusty nothing. . . .

(*Enter TROILUS and PANDAR.*)

Ah, here comes dear Troilus, and uncle Pandar too.

As true as steel, as plantage to the moon –

There's your cue, Troilus. Speak your lines so as to bring out all their beauty, as you used to in the old Globe days.

TROILUS. (*Coming forward.*)

As true as steel, as plantage to the moon,

As sun to day, as turtle to her mate,  
As iron to adamant, as earth to the centre,

Yet, after all comparisons of truth,  
As truth's authentic author to be cited,  
As true as Troilus shall crown up the verse

And sanctify the numbers.

PANDAR. (*Coming forward.*) I'll be the witness. "If ever you prove false to one another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end after my name; call them all Pandars; let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between Pandars."

POET. Magnificent! Wonderful! – Yes. – Divine poetry and superb declamation! Yes – yes! – But . . . well, you see, my good friends, this younger generation of ours has no more any use for that sort of thing, except occasionally in Shakespeare revivals. I fear there is now very little demand for anything but free verse, or for blank verse so irregular as to be unrecognizable.

CRESSIDA. But what a pity!

POET. Yes, I think so too. But I ought to have made it clear that it was not my intention to introduce you into a verse-drama. . . .

CRESSIDA. Into what then? A narrative poem perhaps?

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POET. Not that either. No; I had in mind a play – well, rather of a post-Shavian type; and for that, you will understand, verse of any kind is not precisely the best medium.

CRESSIDA. And you call yourself a poet?

POET. Why not? Poetry is no more confined to verse than religion is to ritual. It is a function of the imagination, that weaves itself a garment of perfect language, of whatever texture may best suit its mood, which may just as well demand the unregimented rhythms of prose as the monotony of metre.

CRESSIDA. This may be all quite true: but if I am not to speak in verse at all, I am not sure whether we could come to your assistance – could we, Troilus?

TROILUS. Most certainly not.

POET. Of course I should feel it is out of the question that I should use compulsion: but I should deeply regret it if I were obliged to look elsewhere. I imagine that Helen for example would have less scruples than you on such a point.

CRESSIDA. Helen! – Oh, Helen no doubt would consent to anything in order to start on a new career. But you would then have to content yourself with that poor creature Paris; for (though Helen and I are the best of friends) I could not on any account permit Troilus to go about alone with a woman of her reputation.

THERSITES. So, Sir, I perceive and admire your skill as an impresario. Cressida will go with you, you need not doubt it. Rather than resign the part to her dear friend Helen, she will renounce poetry and embrace prose

with as light a heart and as lovingly as she jilted Troilus for Diomed once upon a time.

PANDAR. Fie, Thersites! Speak respectfully of my niece, you naughty-tongued Greek varlet.

CRESSIDA. Let him say what he likes, uncle, so long as I may do what I please. And as to that, Sir (*turning to the POET*), pray understand that I have spoken my last word. This is a matter about which Troilus and I cannot compromise. However tempting may be your offer to introduce us into the drawing-rooms and studios of your latter-day London, I at least feel bound to decline the adventure. I have my character to think of: I could not be false to that – even though it may sometimes compel me to be false to my poor Troilus – but that only in verse; never in your vulgar prose. To such an indelicacy I could not demean myself. For our characters, as I have explained to you, are essentially lyrical. We are grateful to you for the compliment you have paid us by your kind proposal; but I think there can be no further need to prolong this interview. So please excuse us if we now disappear. – Come, Troilus!

PANDAR. Stay, niece, stay! Why will you always be so flighty? You are such a woman! What, refuse so noble an offer! Troy was but a poor foolish place: but London, London! Have you any discretion? What was Troy to London? Why, a sparrow's nest to an eagle's.

CRESSIDA. Good uncle, you may go seek your fortune in London without me. You will find there occupation in plenty for your talent, I doubt not

## Thersites

PANDAR. And all for a silly whim! Verse, niece! What's verse? Naught but a stale and trivial trick of the tongue. What should Diomed or Troilus know or care whether you kiss and coo and jilt them in metre or in good plain prose. Trust me, there's no language like honest prose for making love in.

TROILUS.  
Hence, brother lackey! Ignomy and shame  
Pursue thy life, and live ay with thy name!  
Come, my sweet Cressid!  
In verse I wooed and lost thee. Be then verse  
Our medium ever, for better or for worse.

(TROILUS and CRESSIDA disappear.)

PANDAR. O world! world! world! Thus is the poor agent despised. – Well, I'd best follow them. Troy's no such bad place after all to grow old and foolish in.

(PANDAR disappears.)

POET. Stop! Where are you going? – Damnation! they have disappeared. What colossal impudence! Thus to be defied by the puppets of one's own creative thought!

THERSITES. Very well, Sir; sub-pœna these rebellious products and portions of your imagination, if you think good, and hale the truants back

to duty. But you will as soon persuade a nightingale to croak like a frog, as compel Cressida to sing to any tune but the one that she has a mind to.

POET. What a set! I wonder how Shakespeare could ever have had the patience to put up with them. Of course I have the power to compel them to return to their obedience: but were I to insist, they might start jibbing or disappearing at some critical moment, and then there would be the devil to pay. No, I had better get rid of them at once. They would prove far more trouble than they are worth. I can easily pick up a more manageable and less obsolete troupe of characters elsewhere, whenever I need them.

(The POET goes out.)

THERSITES. Well, of all the coxcombs it has been my ill fortune to have dealings with, this dapper-tongued journalistic poetaster is the most insufferable. Cressid was wise to have no truck with him. All the same, beggars mustn't be choosers; and under better auspices the descent from poetry to prose might well be worth her while, for the day of the lyrical harlot is over past praying for. As for me, and my new-born philosophical habit of mind, since Shakespeare and Swift are dead and rotten, and Shaw grown respectable, I must bide in hope and patience until the next resurrection of literature.



# Vestigia

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BISMARCK

*'E*<sub>R</sub> *WAR DEUTSCHLAND.*'  
'You can say what you will of him, but for Germany to treat him like this – I would not have dismissed a cook or a groom like this – For forty years "*er war Deutschland*" – he was Germany.' So spoke an old German gentleman to me. That was when He was 'dismissed.' His own words to a friend of mine who was driving with him at Friedrichsruhe were '*Und dann*' [then in English, so that the coachman should not understand] 'when I was kicked out of office I came down here.' I remember the day in Berlin when he drove to the Palace to take leave of the Emperor. I had come to Berlin for a short visit from Leipzig, and as my sister and I were driving down Unter den Linden the traffic was suddenly stopped and a brougham drove by – Bismarck sitting alone on his way to bid farewell to his Emperor. We all waited to see him once more on his return journey to the Wilhelmstrasse where for so many years he had lived and worked for Germany. Then he drove past again sitting upright and alone, and in his hand a single red rose. The visit had not been announced in advance, and only a few people saw Bismarck that day on his last visit to his Emperor before he retired.

That evening at a reception I met a young woman and told her how I had seen the great Chancellor drive by, on

his way back from the Palace, holding a single rose. It was she who had given him the rose. She told me how she had been standing at the gateway of the Palace, and saw Bismarck go by, and on the impulse of the moment she bent forward and handed him, as he sat in the brougham, a rose that she had in her hand. He took it and saluted, kept it during his audience, and held it in his hand as he drove back. His audience was with the Empress. Bismarck had driven to the Palace to bid farewell to his Emperor, but the Emperor was not at home to receive his Chancellor. At the time it seemed to some of us churlish and boorish – but who knows? It may be that William could not face it. It may be that he had some dim foreboding of what that day was to mean for Germany, some dim realization of the thing that he had done.

This is a story I was told at the time. Bismarck had often threatened resignation to the old Emperor, William's grandfather. He sent in his resignation to the grandson. To his consternation it was accepted. Then – I am convinced it was for Germany's sake, not for his own – the proud old man humbled himself. He sought an interview with the Empress Frederick, and asked her to intercede for him, to use her influence with her son. And Queen Victoria's daughter replied, 'Prince Bismarck, for years you have

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made it your business to estrange my son from me, and you have succeeded. I have no longer any influence with him.' Bismarck bowed. '*Zu befehl, Majestät* – As your Majesty pleases,' and withdrew.

*Er war Deutschland* – More than once I saw him in the days when he walked to the Reichstag – the old building in the Leipzigerstrasse, not the one that has recently become 'famous'. He would walk from the Wilhelmstrasse surrounded by a crowd – overtopping them by his shoulders and his head. Always in uniform. You were conscious of a queer suppressed excitement. He strode on – a massive figure – 'a cathedral of a man' some called him – more like a granite war-memorial, I think. The crowd surged after him. The doors flung open, then closed on him, and there was a sigh of relief. He was safe: no one had tried to assassinate him this time.

## MOLTKE

Another figure walking along the Berlin streets, stooping slightly, his hands behind his back, lean figure, clean shaven, patient eyes, like a tired falcon seeking no prey – tired and well content. His victories were enough for one lifetime. Everyone raised his hat as the Field-Marshal – he was very old then – walked slowly along the street. He saluted with his grave courtesy – no crowds – no secret police had to escort him. There was no air of excitement, no feeling of strain. The old gentleman walked slowly along, he at the edge of the pavement, and each of us uncovered as Moltke passed on.

## JOACHIM

In my young days Joachim would stay with us when he visited England. One evening we were waiting before the early dinner – early, as we lived some distance from the Concert Hall – and my little brother came from his nursery to be introduced to the great violinist. Joachim asked him if he were coming to the concert, and he said he could not as his bedtime was half-past seven.

'Are you fond of music?'

'Yes, very.'

'What sort of music do you like?'

'I think "The Death of Nelson" is the finest song I have ever heard.' Then my brother paused a moment and asked solemnly and with awe,

'Mr. Joachim, can you play "The Death of Nelson" on your fiddle?'

'I do not know, but I will try.'

He went into the hall, brought in his fiddle and standing up in the middle of the drawing-room played to my little brother with as much seriousness and attention and majesty as if he were before the most critical audience in Europe. My brother thanked him, received a good-night kiss and went off to bed.

## FREDERICK SANDYS

Alfred Tennyson, Aubrey de Vere, and Frederick Sandys were talking together, and Rossetti was mentioned. Aubrey de Vere made some disparaging remark about him. Tennyson turned to him and in his deep and solemn voice, 'Aubrey, never let me hear you speak like that again of the man who wrote the finest sonnet in the

## Vestigia

English language.' He then recited it. Sandys was so impressed he felt sure he would never forget it, but after so many years when he told me this story he could not be quite sure. He read the sonnets through again and again, and he would say to himself, 'It was surely this,' but he never could be quite certain – never quite certain, and now nobody will ever know.

It was in the days of Sunday Breakfast Parties and Frederick Sandys had a small party, and after breakfast he asked Swinburne – it was when they were young men together – to recite some of his poetry. Swinburne began reciting, some of it his own work, some of it other men's, English, French, Italian, and they sat spell-bound till two o'clock, and not one of them wanted him to stop, or made a move to go home.

George Meredith, Swinburne and Sandys in a third-class carriage from Victoria on their way to the Crystal Palace. The London, Chatham and Dover Railway was leisurely, and it was a long slow journey. Swinburne got the name *Faustine* into his head, and said, 'I will try and make as many rhymes to it as I can before we arrive,' and that's how *Faustine* came to be written in a third-class carriage of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway.

Sandys was in difficulties, and I was told there was a picture by him for sale, and it would be doing him a good turn if I would try and find a buyer for it. After some difficulty, I ascertained that the picture was on exhibition in some club. I cannot swear to the

street, but I am almost certain it was Great Portland Street. Going up a steep stairway I knocked at the door. It was opened a few inches by a very powerful and somewhat forbidding man who seemed to be in charge of the premises, and was in no way anxious to admit me. I asked if I might see a picture by Mr. Sandys. After a whispered conversation within, I was admitted and received by an elegant person in knee breeches and a sculptor's smock. As soon as I told him my business, he was extremely friendly and cordial. With a magnificent gesture, he turned to the custodian, and indicating me, pronounced my name and instructed him that I was to have the freedom of the club at any hour, day or night.

I was then ushered to the far end of the huge room, and brought before not one picture but two. The master of ceremonies, realizing the impression they made upon me, stood before them in hushed and reverent silence. 'To look at them,' he said, after a pause of emotion, 'is to feel a better man.'

It was my business, however, to bring the conversation to a lower level: I was there to get some money for Sandys. With a good deal of winding about, I at last succeeded in inducing him to name a price. I was not an experienced buyer, but some obscure prompting made me then ask, 'And if I put down the money, I suppose I become the owner of the pictures?' I became conscious of a certain slight embarrassment. 'Well, my dear old boy, you see it's not quite like that. All of us here would do anything for dear old Sandys, and, well, you know how it is. As I've said, any of us

## Vestigia

would do anything for him, and now and then he has had a little on account. I myself, for instance –.' In short, after some moments of intricate adumbration, I realized that the pictures had long ceased to be the property of poor Sandys, and that most of the members of the club had what my friend delicately called a 'lien' on any sums that might accrue. I did not pursue the matter further, but we parted on the best of terms.

Then I went round to try to see Sandys himself. I was one of the very few people who knew where to find him. I knocked at the studio door and rang the bell. I could hear noises within, and voices, one of them his own, but no one came. All my knocking and ringing was of no avail, and at last I gave it up and came away. The next time he came to see me, I told him of my experience. He was extremely contrite. 'But my dear fellow, why didn't you shout your name through the keyhole? I *never* open the door. It might be a dun.'

Sandys was very eager to make a portrait of Mr. George Meredith, and set out to Flint Cottage to try to persuade him. I was going there myself that day, and we met at Victoria. Mr. Meredith would not hear of it. In vain Sandys recounted the famous men whose portraits he had painted, and finally, by way of climax – 'and Tennyson sat for me.' 'Yes, I dare say he did. And you –' then followed a Meredithian-Rabelaisian sketch of Sandys' putative sufferings on that occasion. 'And you put up with it all, because you thought you were doing it for posterity.' His fist came

down on the table – 'I don't care a damn for posterity.' The argument ended, we sat in the garden, and Mr. Meredith and Sandys talked of their early days, how they had been to the Derby, and Sandys saw nothing of the race because he was asleep at the bottom of the chaise: and of Sandys' ambition as a young man and what he had meant to do. 'My dear Sandys, I told you. Your bow had to be stronger and your arrows to fly further, but all the time you were shooting over the heads of the people. The winged words of wisdom which I poured into your ears would have penetrated the skull of a bullock, but you would not listen – ah, Sandys, Sandys, if you had listened what a different Sandys it would have been.'

Yet none of his friends ever really wanted a different Sandys, though there was one occasion when they tried to alter his circumstances. Sandys' affairs had become even more than usually involved, and some of his friends thought it might be a good idea – for him and for English painting – if they clubbed together and made it possible for him to make a fresh start in Paris: though Sandys being still the same Sandys, he was quite likely never to have got further than Boulogne. Sandys readily consented. The money was subscribed and a farewell dinner arranged. The evening drew on, and it was about time for Sandys to start for the eleven o'clock train from Charing Cross. The shadow of his departure began to fall upon his hosts, but not however upon Sandys. He showed no sign of moving; and at last one of his friends taking out his watch suggested the farewell drink, as it was time he was starting.

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'Starting?' said Sandys. 'Why should I be starting?'

'But, my dear Sandys – it was all arranged.'

'Yes,' said Sandys, 'but that was

some time ago when I was hard up. Why should a man with £200 in his pocket think of leaving London?' To which indeed there seems to be no convincing answer.

## OVERHEARD

ADOLPH HITLER died and stormed his way to Heaven Gate. He demanded admission. With a perfunctory glance at the books and a stern look at the invader, the Prince of the Apostles told him he had made a mistake. The Leader, unabashed, said the matter of his entry could wait: 'But I will not go till I have seen him I have come to see.'

'Who is that?' asked St. Peter.

'Moses,' said Hitler.

The Saint was torn between indignation and incredulity.

'You – to see the Patriarch! Do you know of what race he is of?'

'Never mind that. I will – I must see Moses.'

After an argument, St. Peter, who had his own curiosity, consented to send a message along the files of the Dominions.

There was a pause.

Then Moses, hand in tangled beard, his horns terrible with brightness, appeared at the Gate.

St. Peter indicated the waiting figure.

As the Patriarch turned his fierce bright eyes at the little Leader, even Hitler's insolence and self-assurance quailed a little.

'You asked for me: I am here,' said the voice that had spoken on Sinai.

'Yes,' said Hitler. 'Yes: tell me – who did set fire to the Burning Bush?'

A COOLIDGE story concerns the belated visit he made to the home of Emily Dickinson. According to Bernard De Voto, the Rotary Club of Northampton was delicately appalled by their discovery that Mr. Coolidge had never set foot within this local shrine. Without pausing to inquire whether, indeed, he had ever heard of that sanctified poetess, they organized a pilgrimage at once.

Now Cal was no more taciturn than any other Yankee. But he did have – and most of the stories about him spring from this faculty – a shrewd ability to shut up in the presence of the unfamiliar. Carefully, reverently, the committee showed him about the Dickinson place. This was the rug Emily's feet had pressed. Here behold the chair in which she sat, yonder, the candlestick and snuffers she had used. Through it all, Cal maintained the silent petrification of the Great Stone Face. The committee laboured on. They produced her spinning wheel, the desk at which she sat. No response. Finally, as the culminating privilege, they threw open a secret cupboard drawer and produced some manuscript. Here were poems in her own hand, unpublished. And the first gleam of interest came to Cal's eye.

'Um!' he said. 'Wrote with a pen, eh? I dictate.' – NEW YORKER.

# Why the Gulls Flourish

by E. M. Nicholson

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VULTURES do not range into northerly latitudes, where carrion on a grand scale is rarely to be found. But the vulture niche in the general scheme still has to be filled; even if there are not many animal corpses lying about, creatures have to be available for disposing of them. The outcome of this situation is a curious compromise; in temperate countries our acting vultures have only a part-time job. When there are no corpses to live upon they need an alternative diet. This alternative diet may be looked for in one of two directions. By default of dead animal food they may look for living prey – mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects or invertebrates. Or they may turn to vegetarianism. Naturally most of the birds which are open to act as scavengers on occasion turn to the first of these alternative sources when scavenging fails. The earlier scavengers, such as the red kites, which used to soar in parties even over London Bridge, and the universal raven, were birds ready and able to snap up any other living thing which they found sufficiently small or weak. But while as scavengers they enjoyed, even in the Middle Ages, some human protection, as raiders of chickens and game they stirred up the anger of a class of people who, armed with better

and better shotguns, were able to exterminate them over a large part of Great Britain.

Even if they had stuck to carrion, modern sanitation must have eliminated them; their depredations only hastened the process. The tropical vulture, through greater specialization, has on the whole stayed immune from persecution, and only sanitation will evict him from the cities. But in England, the two obvious lines of entire dependence on carrion, or of partial dependence eked out by systematic poaching, are barred, the first by insufficient supply, the second by armed resistance. Yet for an occasional vulture there are tempting prizes lying about. It is this situation which accounts, very largely, for the success of the gull family in the British Isles. Gulls are sharp-eyed and ruthless consumers of every sort of offal and carrion, but they have the decisive advantage of turning, when carrion fails, to other sources of food which do not bring them into incessant conflict with man. While they are locally very unpopular for raiding the eggs and young of other birds, especially of game birds, no one grudges them their beachcombers' perquisites, and even their levy on grain is compensated by a large consumption of

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slugs, grubs, and other pests on the farm.

How successful the gulls are in the British Isles, and how recent their success has been, is not well understood. The old term sea-gull has become obsolescent through the extent of their invasions. The winter gull population of London now runs into thousands, yet it has existed for only forty years. There are now two common London species; ten years ago there was only one – the black-headed. The so-called common gull, which is the newcomer to London, has also begun to breed in England for the first time during the past two decades; it used to be a winter visitor. The great black-backed gull is still described in the most modern bird books as being scarce on the South Coast, although on a single South Devon beach I was recently able to count forty-two full-grown birds of this species, and there were almost always several in sight all along the coast.

A study of the way of life of the herring gull suggests some reasons for this success. In a certain South Devon bay the crab and lobster fisheries are actively carried on by the fishermen of two coastal villages, while in October and November the herring fishery brings drifters from farther afield. At either end of the bay the herring gulls have a roost, separated by about ten miles of coast. One of the roosts is on a steep promontory close to a lighthouse, which every twenty seconds illuminates the landscape from sunset to sunrise. The surrounding slopes and even an exposed field up above are covered with the discarded white feathers of a thousand gulls; the place

looks like a poultry run. At first glimpse the choice of a dormitory so powerfully and frequently illuminated seems curious, but when the gulls' aptitude for exploiting human arrangements is grasped, the usefulness of the unfailing lighthouse for exposing approaching enemies is evident. The gulls do not fear anything human which is calculable, and which refrains from persecuting them.

At dawn, before the light is extinguished, the gulls wake up and hurry to the beaches of the fishing villages, where men are already astir hauling in the lobster-pots. The early bird catches the most desirable offal, and this explains the paradox of a species which enjoys as much leisure as almost any in England, being compelled to start food-getting before it is really light and before even plodding starlings are up. No pretence of being anything but parasitic is made by the majority, they stand about the beach in groups, and fall clamouring on any refuse which is thrown down. As early as ten in the morning many seem replete, and retire to the shingle, well away from the houses, where they doze in a close mass, with enough vigilant members to arouse the flock if anyone heads directly for it, or takes an undue interest in it; mere passers-by, however close, do not worry them. While some stay sitting, sanding and preening on the beach till sunset, others use their long period of leisure in flying over and swimming in the sea, in resting on inland waters, in soaring with the help of the constant updraft along the cliff faces, or in exploring the fields of the hinterland.

The herring gull does not assume mature plumage until its fourth year,

## Why the Gulls Flourish

and as the immature birds are more or less mottled with brown, according to seniority, it is possible to form an unusually exact opinion of the age distribution of any party or flock under observation. While material for generalising hardly exists, it seems likely that of the entire herring gull population in autumn not more than a third of the birds are immature, leaving two-thirds of them at three or more years of age – an impressive indication of their firm grip on life. But on investigation it appears that instead of each flock having its quota of around one-third immature birds some parties show an actual majority of immature and others are exclusively adult. This segregation does not seem to be due to accident. The herring gull is by nature ravenous, observant, imitative and parasitic. His craving for food is strong, and his equipment for satisfying it includes a commanding size, powerful wings, a sharp and heavy bill, and a brain quick to profit by the discoveries of others, and ready also to experiment on its own account. In the immature bird these features are very marked, and when his parents at last cease to cater for his appetite his discomfort is acute. Forced to find his own living, he still follows adults, trying by repeated peevish notes to work the old trick and persuade them to bring him food again. But the adult has ceased by autumn to respond to this stimulus, and his only course is to watch how they get their food and imitate it. When the adults, familiar with the by-products of the crab industry, flock to the villages, they are closely followed by immature birds. But copious as the refuse is, it takes time to satisfy the

needs of the gull population, and those who are strongest and most experienced have the first pick. The great black-backed gull, by his superior size and strength, is actually able to make the others stand off while he takes his share. Then come the adult herring gulls, then the most determined and skilful of the one and two year olds. It may be nearly noon before the raw young birds of the year are able to push their way to the front and fill their stomachs, when almost all the rest have gone off on other business. Even then passing adults which have digested their earlier feast often swarm round and take further levy. The frustrated young birds whine freely at their sad lot, and make desperate efforts to find something edible which the others do not know of. One such bird walked round with a matchbox in its bill which it tried to eat, and then began pecking at a coil of rope; another truculently stood guard over a heap of vegetable refuse which had just been thrown out, ignoring leaves and stalk in order to devote attention entirely to the grease-paper which had formed the wrapping. This inventive resource is not lost among the adult birds. I found one which daily haunted a particular small cove on a stormy, iron-bound coast, standing on the rocks and always peering into the cauldron of sea-water beneath. Frequently he detected an object and swooped down to retrieve it, returning afterwards to his watchtower like a fly-catcher to his post. Habits such as this, which prove successful, are rapidly imitated by others, and add to the range of patterns of living which enable the gull family to multiply where more specialized and hide-bound species go under.



# Some Convent Recollections

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My earliest Convent recollections date from thirty years ago, almost exactly.

I am sitting, a lanky, solemn child of ten, beside my mother in a four-wheeled cab, and it is taking us to a convent-school just outside London.

I know that the month was September: I remember the familiar smell of my mother's sealskin jacket, and the warmth of her muff, from which it is possible to infer that cold weather had set in. But I also remember that I wanted very much to have an ice, and had in fact been promised one, as a final treat before going to school.

We tried two or three confectioners, but there was no ice to be had.

Nothing could be more disjointed than my remembrance of that first arrival. I know – but I do not in the least remember – that we were shown into a parlour, and I am perfectly certain, from a long subsequent acquaintance with the ways of convents, that it was very clean, and very cold, that it smelt strongly of beeswax and of that sort of mustiness that comes from perpetually closed windows, and that we were kept waiting in it for a long while.

The only things I really remember are that the nun who eventually took me in charge scratched my face with the frill that stood out stiffly beneath her veil, when she kissed me, and that

she told me she could see I was a very good child.

Experience in the nursery at home having always led me to believe the contrary, I very ungratefully put her down at once, in my own mind, as a fool.

She took me into the hall when my mother went away, and I remember that I could see tears in my mother's eyes, through her veil. I felt very sorry, when I kissed her good-bye, but not sorry enough to want to cry because I was pleased and excited at the idea of going to school.

When the cab had driven away from the door the nun spoke very kindly to me, and said that I was a very brave little girl not to cry. I realized at once that she had expected me to shed tears, and felt rather ashamed of not having done so.

The next moment I caught sight of a large mural painting of Our Lord, and forgot everything else. I had never seen a picture painted on a wall before, and it impressed me immensely.

I remember nothing else at all about my arrival. But I still retain several very clear impressions, all of which must date from my first few days at the convent.

There was the interesting discovery that a number of sins existed of which I had never so much as heard. The chief of these was immodesty.

Unfortunately, I betrayed im-

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modesty from the moment I arrived, dressed in a short velveteen frock that barely reached my knees. The nuns were so horrified by my display of leg that I was made to wear a borrowed uniform – blue serge, coming almost to my ankles – until my own could be made.

Even more surprising was my next failure in decency.

Once a week the entire school, divested of its customary black aprons and wearing the regulation blue cotton gloves, was assembled together in the presence of the community, and the marks of the week were read aloud.

We sat in rows, and waited for the state entrance of Reverend Mother. My first appearance at this function was the occasion of a small scandal.

As I sat at the end of my row – I was the youngest, though by no means the smallest, child in the Senior School – I saw that a nun on the opposite side of the room was making signs to me. What she sought to convey I could not imagine.

I nervously smoothed my hair, straightened my shoulders, took my gloves off, put them on again, and still she continued to frown, to shake her head, and to make incomprehensible signals.

Owing to the strict rule of silence prevalent in all convent schools, I could not ask enlightenment of my neighbours. At last, the nun was reduced to coming over to me, and making clear my enormity.

‘You are sitting immodestly,’ she hissed into my astonished ear. Even then I did not at once understand that she meant I was sitting with one knee crossed over the other.

Later, I learned that this attitude is never permitted to any convent child.

Modesty also forbade any of us to view ourselves uncovered. A bath – which was not, I may add, a frequent occurrence – necessitated the donning of a large bath-chemise, and shrouded decently in its folds one entered the bath, and washed – or did not wash – underneath it as best one could. I remember that this regulation rather amused me. I never thought of evading it.

My worst lapse from modesty was on an occasion when I had knelt too long in the Chapel before breakfast, and had fainted. (Fainting was not at all uncommon, since we all went to early Mass fasting, every day, and open windows were not in favour.)

I was taken up to the infirmary, and told to undress and get into bed.

The kind infirmarian went off to the dormitory to fetch my nightgown, and I, in her absence, undressed myself. There was a fire in the room – I had not seen one since I came to the convent – and, stark naked, I sat on a little chair in front of it, and enjoyed the warmth. Looking back, I can only think that the infirmarian was a particularly broad-minded nun, for although she flung my nightgown over me at once, all she actually said was: ‘A more modest little girl would never have done that. What *must* your poor Guardian Angel have thought!’

My Guardian Angel, alas, had many worse shocks to come.

I remember the infirmary as quite a pleasant place, except that the food was always very nasty – but then it

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was never nice, excepting on Sundays, when we were allowed sweets.

(On Friday we had buns for *gouter*, which was eaten out of doors, and usually consisted of a slice of bread thinly covered with gooseberry jam. The buns were supposed to sustain us after a *maigre* dinner. They were carried into the boot-and-cloakroom in large baskets, and the girls helped themselves. The result was that the more determined shovers got two buns apiece and the weaker, or more timid, none.)

But to return to the infirmary.

The infirmarian was very kind, and some of the other nuns came to visit me occasionally. One of them asked me how many decades of the Rosary I had said whilst lying in bed.

I do not remember whether I was honest enough to own that it had never occurred to me to put my leisure to this pious use. But I do remember that she told me of two former pupils, both of them in bed – though not, I am sure, in the same room, which would certainly have been contrary to modesty.

These invalids embarked upon a pious competition as to which of them should recite the greatest number of Hail Marys for the intentions of Reverend Mother.

‘They were at it the whole time,’ said the nun triumphantly. ‘They could hardly be got to stop for meals.’

Unfortunately I cannot recall the figure achieved by the eventual winner – but it certainly ran into thousands.

I am told that nowadays convent-school education is coming more into line with the requirements of secular establishments. Thirty years ago, so

far as my experience went, we were taught nothing at all. The nuns were kind, they were pious, they were for the most part well bred – but they were not well-educated themselves, nor had the majority of the class-mistresses either training or special aptitude for teaching.

The music mistress-in-chief had, we were told, been appointed to the position because she had a special devotion to St. Cecilia! I see every reason to believe that similar weighty considerations had prevailed in the selection of other teachers.

We played no games, excepting indoor ones of the old-fashioned French variety – ‘*Nous n’irons plus au bois*’ and ‘*La Tour qui tombe*’ – and a ridiculous playground exercise known as ‘The rescue of the Holy Sepulchre’ – which was a kind of mixture of rounders and French-and-English, with the indispensable dash of holiness supplied by the division of the players into two camps – the Crusaders and the Infidels.

Holiness, indeed, prevailed on every possible and impossible occasion. We prayed before lessons, before recreation, before meals – we squabbled over the relative merits of St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis of Sales – we splashed ourselves and one another with holy water – we wrote urgent requests on small pieces of paper and placed them beneath the many devotional statues that stood all over the school.

A favourite topic of conversation was the speculation as to which amongst us might eventually develop ‘a vocation’ and enter the religious life. To suggest that some of us might marry

## Some Convent Recollections

would have been immodest. It was called 'remaining in the world.'

Amongst the older girls I have no doubt that the vocation question was taken much more seriously.

When the Superior-General came to visit the convent, we were told that she would devote one evening to private interviews. Any girl who felt that she had something special to say, might avail herself of the privilege. As the visit of a Superior-General to a convent is something like a review of a regiment, on the eve of active service, by its Commander-in-Chief – only much more so – I have since come to the conclusion that this concession of time by an extremely busy and responsible woman was probably expressly intended for the benefit of one or two chosen spirits who might, within the next few months, be expected to apply for permission to enter the noviciate.

Certainly, when I put my name on the list of those desiring a private interview, I was rather surprised to see that I was alone amongst my contemporaries. And I remember a tall, golden-haired girl – a Child of Mary – (the spiritual equivalent of a Prefect) – inquiring rather suspiciously, as we waited in the passage outside the door of one of the smaller parlours, whether I *really* wanted to see the Superior-General.

Yes, I did want to see her.

And see her I did.

On the whole, I believe that her kindness, her courtesy and humour on that occasion are the most vivid of all my convent recollections. I know that I did not in the least realize – as I have since come to do – that in all prob-

ability a child of my age had never before demanded, and obtained, a private interview with the Superior-General of the Order. (I still think that I must have been let in by mistake.) Still less did I realize that the problem upon which I sought for guidance was in any way incommensurate to the occasion.

After some preliminary courtesies in the course of which the Superior-General asked me my name and age, and whether I liked being at school, I came to the point.

'I want to know,' said I, 'whether I am to be obliged to eat eggs. They make me feel sick.'

How often in the thirty years that have elapsed since that solemn and artless inquiry, have I mentally paid tribute to her reception of it!

Not a muscle quivered, as the Reverend Mother-General gave her full consideration to my problem.

At last she inquired whether I was made to eat eggs at home.

I said that I was not.

'In that case,' she said gravely, 'you need not eat them here.'

I was not surprised, many years later, to see that her life had been written, as that of a remarkable and gifted woman, with a great sense of humour.

I have no recollection of any other specially outstanding personality amongst the nuns in charge of us. Most of them were very kind, but in a thoroughly impersonal way.

Infatuations were not in fashion at that particular convent. As for those alliances known as 'particular friendships' amongst the pupils themselves,

## Some Convent Recollections

they stood only second in heinousness to failures in 'modesty'.

It was all, of course, long before wells of loneliness had been plumbed to their depths by the whole of the civilized world – and I very much doubt whether any of us had the slightest idea as to *why* it should be considered a sin to like one companion better than another, and a still worse sin to display such a preference.

There was a rule, very strictly enforced, that in no circumstances might any two girls talk alone together, even in the midst of a crowded recreation hour.

The only explanation we were ever given was that 'Where there are two together, the devil always makes a third.'

For years, I was quite unable to rid myself of the feeling that any *tête-à-tête* conversation had, *ipso facto*, something slightly nefarious about it.

The end of my stay at that particular convent school came rather quickly, and was extraordinarily characteristic of an establishment in which modesty ranked so high, and common-sense so low.

It had apparently never occurred to the nuns that a small child of ten years old, fresh from a nursery, might require some supervision in the ordinary routine of hygiene.

Unfortunately, it had never occurred to my parents either to give me a simple and matter-of-fact explanation of the first rule of health.

Not only did it never enter my head that a duty I had always fulfilled without in the least knowing why it was required of me, could not be

neglected without dire results – but I was deeply impressed by the convent assumption that 'immodesty' must be attached to any mention of the natural functions of the body. It was the fear of seeming immodest, far more than anything else, that prevented me from asking permission to leave the room, when I ought to have done so.

The eventual result of so much modesty and so much ignorance, was a severe illness of which I nearly died.

What the convent doctor must have been like I cannot imagine. He diagnosed 'a touch of tonsillitis' – but when my temperature reached 104, agreed that my mother should be written to. She came to see me, and insisted on taking me home then and there. Why I did not die on the journey I shall never understand. I can remember feeling acute pain and bewilderment, and then relief at finding myself at home again.

After that I was ill for weeks, with intestinal inflammation. It is perhaps not altogether surprising that I was never sent back to the convent.

One or two of the nuns and several of the girls wrote to me very kindly, and many years later, when chance took me there as a visitor, I was most cordially received as an old pupil of the Order.

I did not, naturally, refer to my great failure as 'a modest little girl', and the good nuns, no doubt, had long since forgotten all about it.

But it made an indelible impression on my ten-year-old consciousness, all the same, and all that I have written is true, and will remain with me as long as memory remains.

# Out of Season

## by Alex Glendinning

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THE fat woman sat outside on one of the green-painted iron chairs in the palm garden. She sat under one of the palm trees and fanned her face with a postcard. It was very hot. The light from the sun lay sharp against the steady palm shadow, but even under the palm tree it was terribly hot. The fat woman sat, her knees pressed apart by her fatness, fanning her face and looking out through the iron railings across the road at the sea. She felt very damp and uncomfortable.

Having to move the postcard made her warm. She stopped fanning and laid her wrist on the iron table so that she would not make a mark on her dress. She took her vanity bag from the table and fumbled in it and brought out her metal powder box. She looked in the back of the box, holding it up and saw some of her bright red angry face in the silver square of the glass. She dipped the puff into the powder and rubbed it over her nose and cheeks and put the box back in her bag. It was still early morning.

An old man came out of the hotel and down the gravel path to go out of the gate. He had a yellow panama and white tennis shoes. He bowed to her as he went by, raising the panama.

'Good-morning, Miss Drage. A beautiful morning.'

'Beautiful. But so hot.'

He smiled, creasing his dry yellow face.

'Just nice,' he said. 'Just how I like it.'

He lifted the panama again and went through the gate out on to the promenade. She heard the sea dropping on the stone beach, a tired sound. That was one of the people from India. He liked it because it was hot. It would go on being hot like this all day and at night you got in under the mosquito net and it was hot still. The mosquito net had a dry smell like old lace curtains. She had three mosquito bumps on her forehead.

Nobody went by on the road outside, everything was quite still. A little way up the promenade there were painters hanging on cradles painting at the front of the Hôtel Côte d'Azur, she had noticed them yesterday. They were getting the place ready. The post office was being fixed up too, you might think they were rebuilding it. You walked in crunching on mortar and mortar dropping down on you from the scaffolding over the door. There was a smell of mortar and a clattering of hammers, so that you had to shout at the girl behind the wire grille. She didn't understand anyway. The town was being fixed up for people to come and stay in it. In another three or four months the Casino would be open, there would be dances, people going

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about in motors, sitting out on the promenade, walking up and down with parasols. Gambling at night in the Casino. Battles of flowers.

A long time ago, while she was still at school, she had read a story about people who went to the south of France every year for the Season. On the outside of the book there was a coloured picture of the terrace at Monte Carlo. That image had stayed in her mind, bright and sharp as a scene in a peepshow: dazzling white against the blue of the sea. And in the foreground a dark handsome face, bowed in some exquisite compliment.

In three or four months it would be the Season, and the hotel charges would go up. And the nights would be cool. Long before that she would have to go back to England and when she met her friends she would say, 'Yes, I have just come back from the south of France.' For years she had wanted to be able to say that to her friends. Well, she could go back now and say that to them. And the Duke of something or other had his yacht in the harbour at Monte Carlo, just round the corner. Yes, I saw the Duke there one day. Yes, I remember seeing his yacht in the harbour.

In the evening she sat looking at an old *London News* in a corner of the lounge and three old men from India and one of their wives played bridge. The other wife used to sit at her husband's elbow with knitting, and when he was playing the hand she looked up over the tops of her glasses to see what card he was playing and sometimes leaned over to see what the other players had. When the hand was over she used to tell her husband

what mistakes he had made. They all went to bed about nine and the lights were put out in the lounge. Jacques, the concierge, was always asleep, always sitting in the office with the glass door, leaning forward on the desk with his forehead on the backs of his hands. Sometimes she wanted a postcard or a stamp, but she did not like to waken him to ask for one. She used to come back and look in to see if he was awake. Sometimes she went up to the post office rather than waken him.

She started to fan herself again. She moved forward a little and felt her dress sticking to the iron seat. She heard a step on the gravel and looked round and saw Charlot, the proprietor's son, coming out of the hotel with his sister. He was wearing a white bath-gown and canvas shoes with mat soles. He was going for a bathe. His sister was a little girl. She was in her bathing-suit with a towel round her shoulders. She shifted round on the seat to face them as they came down the path.

'*Bon jour*,' she said.

'Good-morning,' said Charlot. He bowed towards her. He was as brown as a berry, his black hair glistened in the sun. His teeth were very white when he smiled.

'Off for a bathe,' she said.

He stopped and leaned his head forward interestedly.

'Please?'

'You're going for a bathe,' she said.

'Ah, yes,' said Charlot. 'You do not come?'

'No, no,' she said. 'I'm not bathing.'

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'No?' said Charlot. 'But it is nice.' He smiled and nodded and went on down the path. His sister said something to him in French as they went out of the gate and they both laughed.

She watched them crossing the road and the promenade and Charlot stepped over the edge on to the big rock and turned to help his sister down with his brown arms. Their heads went out of sight below the edge of the promenade. She heard the sea flop lazily on the stones. Charlot was taking off his wrap and going down in his mat shoes over the stones to the edge of the water. He was not much more than seventeen, just a boy. He was very well made in his tight bathing-suit, very straight and slender. Brown all over his body with lying out in the sun. A handsome young boy. She heard a splash and a shout and then the shrill voice of the little sister. Charlot had plunged in and come up shaking back his wet hair, plunging and swimming with long splashing strokes, rolling and turning and playing about in the water. He was a good bather and swimmer. She sat looking out through the railings towards the sea. Charlot's black head was bobbing up and down above the water, the little sister was swimming towards him, her red rubber bathing-cap moving along like a rubber ball. Charlot's head disappeared, the sun glinted on his hips and heels as he went down and the little sister screamed and laughed, beating the water with her hands and trying to look down into it to see where he was.

She rocked a little to get up, her dress sticking to the seat. She got up

and moved out into the sun slowly and went out through the gate and across to the edge of the promenade. Charlot lifted his wet arm out of the water and waved to her. He shouted something in French and then he shouted:

'You come to bathe. It is nice.'

She waved her hand. The little sister lay on her back and kicked up the water with her legs.

The sun was shining on the sea so that you could hardly look at it. She turned and looked up and down the promenade. There was nobody about. On the front of the Côte d'Azur she saw the white coat of a painter hanging in his cradle half way up. The promenade was white and dry, nobody was sitting in any of the seats. She looked back at the sea. Charlot had swum far out, she could see his black head bobbing in the track of the sun. Now he was swimming in, his face down in the water, lifting his elbows. She stood sweating in the sun, she felt the sweat running down from under her arms and running down her thighs. The little sister was sitting waist-deep in the shallows leaning back on her arms watching Charlot coming through the water. He came ploughing in, leaving a wake behind him till he was in shallow water. He lifted his face, blowing and spouting. He bent, feeling for the bottom and stood up, thigh-deep. He was a fine, slender boy. He smoothed back his hair and looked up and saw her on the promenade. He waved his arm again.

'Hallo,' he called.

She lifted her hand.

'You're a fine swimmer,' she called



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He struggled forward in the water and put his hand behind his ear.

'All right,' she called. 'Fine swimmer.'

He waved his arm and laughed, not understanding. She turned and went back across the road into the garden. She panted and sweated with the exertion of walking.

She went into the hotel, into the sudden gloom. As she went past the office she saw Jacques through the glass door lying forward on the desk with his head on his arms sleeping. She went on up the shallow stairs to the top and went into her bedroom. The shutters had been left open and the sun was baking the shabby carpet. She went over and pulled the shutters in. As she looked out over the garden and the promenade she saw the two heads moving on the water and heard the sound of splashing.

Now the sun came in through the shutters and lay in bright strips on the floor. She pulled off her hat and felt the damp hair sticking to her forehead. She took off her clothes and

threw them over the back of a chair. She moved about the room in her bare feet, but she did not feel any cooler. The shutters kept out the air, but it was too hot to open them and let in the sun. She went over to the bed. The mosquito net hung down over it from the ceiling like a bridal veil. She gathered the dry mesh in her hands and bundled it in between the wall and the bed-rail and lay down on the bed. The sheet was like canvas, hot and dry. She lifted her hands and put them behind her head and lay stretched out on the bed looking up at the ceiling. She listened to her short, difficult breathing.

The heat pressed down on her fat body, squeezing out the sweat. It ran tickling her skin. She felt the sag of her enormous breasts, she felt her whole heavy fatness pressing down on the hard bed. Outside beyond the closed shutters she heard the screams of the little sister and Charlot's voice shouting and the splash of water as they played.

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MARLBOROUGH: HIS LIFE AND TIMES.  
Volume II. By WINSTON S. CHURCHILL  
Harrap. 25s.

ACCURACY, no doubt, is the first virtue of an historian: but any accuracy not a pedant's must include three more virtues less easily come by – fulness, lucidity, and substantiality. He must be full, must show the whole stream of discrete, discrepant forces whose union and interaction are the event: he must be lucid, so that his reader stands over the whirling tangle, seeing not only its contents and their direction, but their proportion and their relative impact: and he must be substantial, must convince his reader that he is dealing not with black and white squares on a map, but with the conduct of men among events whose issue, at any given moment, they cannot forecast with any certainty. The second volume of Mr. Churchill's *Marlborough* has all these virtues, and in a brilliant degree. It is primarily a portrait of that strange figure, the Duke of Marlborough, Malbrouck, Corporal John, with his beauty, his icy mind, as vast and clear and imperturbably cold as winter sunlight on the North German plain, his odd meanness in small things, his lack of scruple, his serene longanimity, and those strange patches of warmth about his heart, his genuine devotion to his friend and Queen – no one, reading his private letters, can doubt it was real – and his steady love for the able restless woman who had been his joy and torment for so long, to whom the man of fifty-four can write, after shaking Europe (and after a matter of seventeen hours in the saddle), with the simple passion of a lad of twenty interspersing

the shrewd comment on politics of a cabinet minister to a trusted colleague.

Marlborough dominates the book: but for these years, 1702 to 1708, Marlborough was growing to dominate all Europe, to be the strongest single force in it, since he could control and direct so many forces, by his sheer personal ascendancy or by his lieutenants, Sarah, Godolphin, the Queen, and the implicit faith he gave them in himself. To see Marlborough, we have to see what he handled – one of the great decisive wars of history, with its background of the complex politics of a civilized Europe, and foreground of a professional war machine. His time is in fact the age of the most professional of all the greater European wars, and of those most exclusively concerned with politics in the narrowest sense of the word, with governments rather than with the wild and passionate impulses of nations. Marlborough comes in the time between Gustavus and Napoleon: Gustavus' wars had the Reformation behind them, Napoleon's the Revolution. One went to psalms, the other to the lift of the Marseillaise. Marlborough's had nothing but regimental marches. It is, in fact, the first of the great wars fought, overtly at any rate, over the Balance of Power. To be precise, the War of the Spanish Succession is really the second round of such a war. Louis XIV had grown from baffled, humiliated childhood with the dominant blood of his cool fiery grandfather repressed and soured, and hungry for compensation. the fierce and gay and battered France of the Fronde came into his hands and he forged it, with the steely brains of Colbert and Louvois to help him, to a Prussian discipline, and

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his starvation for power unsated by that, sought to make himself safe on his northern and eastern border. He took the usual method of going about it—that is, of overthrowing his neighbour's landmark – and collided with the Dutch: a misfire gesture and an unlucky wind allowed a Dutch king to mount the throne of England . . . and the Anglo-Dutch fleet was bigger than the French, and quite as able. Louis won victories, but William the war. The Treaty of Ryswyk left France where she had begun. Then a world-power crashed abruptly: as the fall of the French monarchy and the sunset of the Hapsburg flung Europe in war in 1792 and in 1914, so in 1701 did the end of the Spanish Hapsburgs. Next year, Louis' grandson was on the Spanish throne, and the Bourbons spread across Europe – France and Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, half of Italy – with a whole enormous empire in the New World.

*Weltmacht* is not an endearing quality. Europe quailed under the shadow of the Sun-King. A mole dug his burrow: a horse threw his rider: Anne Stewart came out of a humble and comfortless life on the rim of a court, and was Queen of the Three Kingdoms. She has been called a fool: she was, in fact, uncommonly like Queen Victoria. She had a solid sense of responsibility as Queen: she was also John Churchill's friend, and she trusted him, and wished to see him at the head of affairs, which, as events were to prove, was by no means folly. It is at this point that this second volume begins, with a complex prelude of home politics tangled with foreign, for intimate co-operation with the Dutch and the Empire was essential. Marlborough had to handle the European Princes, to command the armies, and through his wife, Godolphin, and the Queen, control affairs at home to ensure a backing. And he was merely an earl of a new creation.

We see his rise to command, itself a

brilliant piece of politics; the forming of the Queen's first government; then the war itself, oddly parallel in its initial conditions to that which we are in process of forgetting; the first campaigns in the North, inconclusive through the caution of the Dutch, fine fighters proven, but lacking the *fougue* that was the immediate need; and so, with Marlborough hampered by the fact that he was never generalissimo, the dragging out of the war to its costly length. We have its course for six years, the complex web of politics and strategy and human inter-relations, to the real turning-point, the campaign of Blenheim, where Marlborough struck for the Low Countries *on the Danube*. It was a great strategic conception: the tactical mastery that brought it to accomplishment, and is shown so lucidly in the many maps, is no less impressive. And, in another way, its lack of fruition is also impressive to the looker-on. It broke the prestige of the Sun-King, made Marlborough a Duke, and a legend: but it did not end the war, as it should have done. The last chapters of the volume give the reason why Ramillies, Oudenarde, Malplaquet, Villaviciosa, and Denain had yet to be fought.

Mr. Churchill moves easily through these large events, always in full control of his material, but never allowing it to die into mere diagram in his grasp: he provides, in fact, against that by an excellent preliminary study of the nature of war in the eighteenth century, of the actual use of weapons and units in practice, the immediate experience of the soldier. It is this sense that we are admitted to witness life and action as they presented themselves to men at the head of vast dangerous affairs, that colours close scholarship with the stuff of drama. Often, looking at history, we are apt to think that so it had to come, like a cloth unrolling. A man who has himself been active politician and serving soldier knows better, that it is like a picture being painted, whose spaces may

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fill with this thing or another. Thus he gives us the vital sense of the past as present, with success or failure in an unseen future conditioned by what one is doing and has done, and full of factors that one may know or not; and we reach some comprehension of the mind of the man who played chess for his country on a board of all Europe, with all that mattered to him as the stake, and won, and wished all the time – the phrase is like a refrain in his intimate letters – ‘to be living quietly at home with Lady Marl.’ And if he had got his wish? Sarah knew better.

THE ISLANDMAN. By TÓMAS 'Ó' CROHAN.  
Chatto & Windus. 8s. 6d.

It is not so long ago since Synge discovered the western folk of Ireland and in a few hasty years brought back from remote islands and mountain-sides a richness of imaginative thought and idiom. His discovery was as surprising to his own country as to the world at large. Who were these extraordinary islanders and fishermen who talked like intoxicated Elizabethans and had such strange notions? Riots at the Abbey Theatre indicated that good citizens refused to believe in these creations of a writing man who had come back from Paris. But now, thanks to the Language Revival, the Gaelic-speaking people of the west are writing their own books, and we are in a position to judge whether Synge was right or wrong.

Mr. O'Crohan's book, which was written in Irish, appeared some years ago as a government publication in the Irish Free State. Dr. Robin Flower has translated it into vigorous English and he has, rightly as we think, avoided that artificial 'dialect' of the Irish Literary Revival which, in its affected dropping of relative pronouns and verbs, produces as

often as not, an effect of cretinism. Some years ago in a poem Dr. Flower described the author of this book.

He had lived on the Island sixty years  
And those years and the Island lived in  
him,  
Graved on his flesh, in his eye dwelling,  
And moulding all his speech,  
That speech witty and beautiful  
And charged with the memory of so  
many dead.

Those who may be surprised by the fact that a simple fisherman and turf-cutter on a remote island could write with such astonishing verve, wit and dramatic power must realize that they are actually in the presence of oral tradition and the native art of story telling. In the mud cabins on a desolate Atlantic rock the classics of Gaelic literature were recited around the winter's fire for centuries.

The Great Blasket lies a few miles off the wild Kerry coast. 'It is a crag,' as Mr. O'Crohan tells us, 'in the midst of the great sea, and again and again the blown surf drives right over it before the violence of the wind, so that you daren't put your head out any more than a rabbit that crouches in his burrow in Inishvickillane when the rain and the salt spume are flying.' Mr. O'Crohan's autobiography is unique, for it tells us not only the story of his own long life, but of a tiny community – almost a mediæval survival in many of its ways – which remained completely untouched by progress. But for the wreck of a wheat-ship upon the Blasket rocks during the Great Famine this island would have been without a living soul to-day and all its memories perished. A deep sense of providence pervades the hardy philosophy of these islanders and this is little to be wondered at, since they have so often been dependent for their very sustenance upon the sea's gifts. In the old days when starvation was imminent a lucky school of

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porpoises could provide sea-meat for a year. The way in which these islanders in the 'seventies and 'eighties discovered modern commodities would have pleased Charles Lamb. The first tea-cask ever washed ashore greatly puzzled them. They used the mysterious grains for dyeing wool and fattening pigs; in both cases it proved highly effective. When the first steamer was observed on the horizon the fishermen thought it was a ship on fire and hastily put out to the rescue.

Many, indeed, of the episodes of childhood and early youth which Mr. O'Crohan described for us are perfect little essays in themselves. Their whimsicality, their delight in simple or fine objects might well be the envy of a weary professional essayist. Among such is the story of the little lad's first pair of boots, a story which directly symbolizes the poverty of the island. As was the custom when the islanders returned from the mainland the cliff above the landing creek was crammed with people eager for tidings. 'There was nobody in the boat that they didn't recognize at a glance but the young gentleman – some of them maintained that he was a child of great people in Dingle who were sending him to spend a week running about the Island. One of my sisters, Eileen, was among them on the cliff, and she couldn't be certain that it was me because of the shining glory about my feet, for I was a thin-legged, barefooted starveling when I left home.' As an example of Mr. O'Crohan's gift we may give a typically vigorous passage. In it he describes how the young girls of the Island lured him from work as a young man.

I knew perfectly well that I'd cut my last sod of turf that day when I saw the mop head of the first of them coming between me and the daylight. For the gang of girls we had in the Island in those days were next door to

being half-wild. And, though I was pretty tired before they came, sure it was they that finished me altogether. And no wonder – six girls, just about beginning to ripen, running over with high spirits, whatever sort of food and drink they had. It's easy baking when you have meal to hand, and so it was with them: stout, strong hoydens, as healthy as the fish in the sea; it made no odds to them what sort of food they had on the table, and they didn't care.

The worst they could do to me didn't vex or worry me, be sure of that. It would have been an odd thing, indeed, if it had, for it was the wild spirit of youth that was driving them, and sure I had a good right to have a spark of the same fire touching me up, too, for there was many a young man of my own kind who'd rather have them playing their games with him than all the turf on the hills.

There is tragedy in these pages, but much, too, of wild merriment and drinking escapades in which the islanders forgot their hardships. But times have changed. 'That's all gone by now, and the high heart and the fun are passing from the world.'

PORTRAITS BY INFERENCE. By HUMBERT WOLFE. Methuen. 6s.

No contemporary literary career has been more barometric than Mr. Wolfe's. He came to the contest comparatively late in life. As he confesses in these essays, 'what I wrote first is of no moment or interest, except to me who had to wait for my thirties to see my first proof.' And that is not so long ago.

Since that time he has become that rare miracle, a poet who is a best-seller. By some trick of fate, personality, or by a perversity larger than his own conscious

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nature he has, like Heine, roused a storm of antagonists, one of whom stung too deeply.

We have not seen much work from him since then. But this does not necessarily signify that we shall not. For a writer, and particularly an audacious writer who skates on thin ice, can profit by his disasters, dying cat-like deaths and returning from each lethal experience with more caution, more integrity, a simpler and less self-conscious confidence, and a more solid technique.

There are some critics who have not been able to join in the hue and cry against Mr. Wolfe; who, though unable to appreciate his literary window-dressing and too frequent up-stage tricks with the poetic limelight, nevertheless saw gleams in his work of an uncommon humanity, a wide and magnanimous insight into human motives and an appreciation of human heroism.

They shared too with the larger public a pleasure in his gift for expressing the nostalgias of the grown-up for the never-never lands of childhood and youth; a gift of the same kind as that of Hans Andersen. They felt too that he had introduced into modern letters a puckishness, a speed, and a technique of elision and allusiveness; qualities whose novelty made the reader gasp and experience almost a sense of physical giddiness when reading his verse.

It was obvious to them that such originality could not be snuffed out by a lampoon.

Their confidence was justified when Mr. Wolfe published the *Uncelestial City* and *Now a Stranger*. In the verse of the former and the prose of the latter, Mr. Wolfe, after the preliminary conjuring tricks, suddenly forgot his audience and became lost in his subject. The quips and tropes and puns disappeared, to be replaced by solid character-drawing which showed at once that here was an author

with a true dramatic instinct, simple after all in his contact with men and women; capable of understanding their conduct and motives, and able to express that understanding forcibly and directly, his wit at last finding material worthy of it. Here was a writer, like his larger prototype Heine, realistic enough in his insight into social and personal problems to be able to forget to attitudinize about them.

In these *Portraits by Inference* Mr. Wolfe develops that power of quick dramatization of the moment. He might call them *Portraits by Lightning Inference*, for though they are deliberate enough in their preparation, the sudden exposure of personality is done by a turn of wit that recalls Mr. Wolfe's naughtier and self-destructive methods whose audacity could not always be justified.

He is particularly convincing in his portraits of grave Permanent Officials, those singularly English products, monuments of taciturnity and benevolent ruthlessness who are so feared by Continental politicians who have to combat them in conferences. As a youngster of twenty-eight Mr. Wolfe went to Paris with Sir Alfred Bateman, after being interviewed and approved at a coffee table in Whitehall Gardens, under the malevolent eye of Edmund Gosse. 'The long narrow garden was empty, and at the far end, seated at their ease about a table, were four gentlemen of the Victorian era speculating on the minute and timidly approaching figure of an early Georgian. They sat at a wooden table with their coffee cups at hand and puffing upon their cheroots, a little group strayed from Trollope and neatly gathered by the *Cornhill Magazine*' Austin Dobson, who was one of the four, asked the newcomer pensively, 'Are you yourself then, a critic, or a writer? No?' Then perhaps you are being successful too early as a civil servant. 'You must watch yourself.'

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'If I were a critic,' Mr. Wolfe replied, 'I should be standing up when I speak to you, Mr. Dobson.' The poet replied, 'As I feared, you are obviously a successful diplomat.'

There was an element of prophecy in the poet's words, for assuredly a successful diplomat is a person who is secretive in the wrong place and who wears his vices on his sleeve. Hence the continued misunderstandings of international affairs.

But in the larger affairs of poetry there is no excuse for professional diplomacy or for the presence of its pernicious technique. We therefore welcome the signs of Mr. Wolfe's abandoning them, and revealing himself as a dramatic writer with deep and generous sympathy, a normal and sane moral sense, and an overbubbling quality of gaiety and fun springing from true compassion and benevolence.

ROBESPIERRE, A STUDY IN DETERIORATION.

By R. SOMERSET WARD. Macmillan 18s.

MR. R. SOMERSET WARD has here done a piece of work much as might have Robespierre himself. It is thorough, it is lucid, and it is devoid of the least flicker of doubt. The book must arouse a threefold interest. First there is the claim of a most carefully documented and well-written account of certain aspects of the French Revolution; then there is the absorption one feels in that enigma, Robespierre, who was passionately convinced that he could bring about the reign of Virtue, and banish egotism forever, by beheading two hundred people a week; and third there is a curious resemblance between the mind of the author and the subject. Mr. Ward analyses Robespierre's character with perspicuity, yet while he lays

bare the sources of Robespierre's implacable virtue, he displays an assurance of opinion, a dry briskness in condemnation that has the perfect Robespierre ring. As Robespierre was called both 'The Incorruptible' and 'The Monster,' so while reading Mr. Ward's book one has a dual reaction caused by his astute perception and his priggish delight in judgement.

The book sets itself to study the steps by which Robespierre became what he was in the end, and anyone who remembers comparing the portraits of a man or woman taken from their early youth to advanced age, and has marked the change from youthful coxcombry to grave nobility, or from fiery promise to ravaged decay will remember how chastened they felt. The portraits of Talleyrand, for example, are horrifying in their contrast, and an explanation of the integration or disintegration of any historical character has the very deepest interest. Mr. Ward explains the mystery of Robespierre as one who has inside knowledge concerning the ways of God. In the first chapter he says 'every human being is endowed with a soul possessing an inherent power of establishing contact with God or of turning away in another direction.' He pauses every few pages in his ably written history to see how the soul of Robespierre is thriving, and if there is a good deal of pious headshaking there is equally astute understanding. In the last chapter he sums up with trenchancy and sound psychological understanding. He shows that the arid rectitude of Robespierre's character was compounded of vanity and timidity, and submits that the dishonour his father brought him doubtless hardened his initial will to perfection. A strange spiritual blindness prevented his seeing any difference between himself and his high and rigid principles so that he could proclaim with conviction 'I am the Truth.' To identify oneself with abstract right has grave consequences.

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SEVEN POOR MEN OF SYDNEY. By CHRISTINA STEAD. Davies. 7s. 6d.

JOSEPH KERKHOVEN'S THIRD EXISTENCE. By JACOB WASSERMANN Allen & Unwin 10s.

BUTCHER'S BROOM. By NEIL M. GUNN. The Porpoise Press. 7s. 6d.

WHO ONCE EATS OUT OF THE TIN BOWL. By HANS FALLADA. Putnam. 7s. 6d.

*Seven Poor Men of Sydney* is a strange and arresting book. Miss Christina Stead, the author, has brilliant gifts, and she writes of life in the harbour city with so original a style that the reader sees with her own vivid insight, yet is hardly able to follow her idiosyncratic vision. Her descriptions are sharply incisive, revealing simultaneously the beautiful and the sordid, so that one senses an atmosphere both jaded and vibrant; almost as though Australian air tired one to the point of delirium in which no burning impression could be denied. Miss Stead raps out with a perfection of just statement the squalor of matter and the fantasy of mind, giving an impression of tropical glare where all is illumined, but where richness turns to corruption. Her characters are young people strongly individual, though impotent. They search for work that does not exist, or agitate for a new society in which they could only be the ill members. All are possessed of astounding eloquence. They dissect themselves, each other, and every facet of living until they are consumed in a fever of understanding. One can only relinquish any idea one may have had that Australia is a new and hardy society, with its members tending to be baldly objective. Miss Stead shows us parents of the generation now rounding fifty who are as grey and jelly-like in substance as newly spawned frogs' eggs. Their children in the early twenties are as darkly imaginative as Poe, as haunted as Baudelaire. In this city of the antipodes

industry is chaotic, poverty and vice reel together, vegetation bursts in richest opulence, and the wild drama of the climate sweeps solidity away. The characters are too intricate to make a short description in any way just, and one can only recommend the sharp experience of being held and baffled by them at first hand. There is Baruch, a Jew, who analyses like a surgeon employing a rapier; Withers, tall, soft and unhealthy, who cheerfully shares his wide knowledge of the pornographic; Michael, shuddering away from the tangible and reaching such subtleties of the intangible that his range of sentiency drives him to suicide; most poignant of all is Catherine, his sister, who voluntarily goes into an asylum that she may shelter her tortured mind among the mad. These people seem to see so much that they remind one of the Indians whose eyelids were cut off and who died from the insanity of constant sight. As the story moves to its final phantasmagoria, the orbit of Miss Stead's imagination sweeps far outside normal experience, but the flexibility of her prose, the strange, wild ease with which she depicts frustration and awareness, can only command the deepest interest and the most complete admiration.

Our search for self-knowledge has many ways of entrapping us. We question the sources of action and become incapable of action. We blow the gaff on the mystery of the known, only to recoil from the disintegration we ourselves have wrought, then take flight into the inactual where an abyss of mystery awaits us or with the absurd intrusiveness of a fly we mistake our own buzzing for the oracles of God. If Miss Stead climbs breathless heights of enquiry, Mr. Jacob Wasserman has the teasing maladroitness of a blue-bottle. In *Joseph Kerkhoven's Third Existence* his characters resemble nothing as much as Teuton professors puffing words out with pomposity until every syllable is



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as stifling as a feather bed. Reason is obscured by ponderous inflation until it is difficult to have patience with a writer whose pedantry demands a continual use of medical terms unknown to the lay reader, yet who describes everything but disease in terms of the loosest pretension. Some of it is frankly absurd, as this – ‘Amid the empurpled intoxication and joyance of her passion.’ Much is stage thunder, as this, ‘The life-force; the vital impetus; the god-body, the god-brain, the divine substance; and, in amplifying counterpart thereto, the unknown impulses in man’s spiritual life, that something which resembles a pulsating heart, the substance of the “vital programme” . . . the sustainer of syneidesis; the infallible, primary, ineradicable consciousness of protoplasm and the cell-State.’ The cumulative effect of six hundred pages of turgid analysis can alone give the weary distaste of the reader, and it wholly incapacitates one for disentangling the bones of the story from the mists in which they are wrapped. Wassermann tells of the ‘inner dynamics’ (the phrase is quoted, not accepted) of Joseph Kerkhoven, his wife and his patients. The most important patient is a famous novelist who is ‘possessed’ by his first wife. At the dictation of Kerkhoven the novelist writes an analysis of the character of this consuming creature. If it were not that the Heavens are parted to reveal a bore, the 250 pages describing a woman ebullient as boiling sugar would be masterly dissection. The novelist’s second wife is drawn to Kerkhoven, the novelist himself is drawn by the wife of Kerkhoven, they swing this way and that, each swelling with unspeakable portent. As Kerkhoven nears death they mount to the unintelligible. Jacob Wassermann was so acutely aware of the confusion of his age that it is pitifully ironic that he added to it such a book.

Mr. Gunn’s *Butcher’s Broom* is by

contrast as refreshing as a hint of spring. His writing is at times as delicate as the first purple haze of buds among the birches, or the rusty light on bursting bog myrtle. Scotland should be proud of Mr. Gunn, for he is the best of her present-day writers and his merits are many. It must be admitted that he knows his virtues, and the universal blight of self-consciousness occasionally drives him to a strained lyricism. But if he is sometimes tempted to do too much the thing he knows he can do well, he sounds again and again the authentic note of poetry. Simply, and freshly as life itself, when not stilled and staled by the intellect, Mr. Gunn tells of the Highlands of over a hundred years ago. An isolated glen, holding a few cottages, the people poor and speaking only the Gaelic, this is the place of his story; but as in that country the eye stretches far, so Mr. Gunn gives us a feeling of wide boundaries of spirit and scene. Highland understanding is delicate and quick, and their relations are full of subtlety. Certain peoples have a fluid sense of each other, as though the same consciousness flowed freely among them all. Russians have it, negroes have a primitive form of it, and Highland second sight seems a natural part of it. Social intercourse has an attractive vivacity where it exists, and it is seldom that one reads of so delightful an occasion as an evening described early in the book where the women waulk the cloth while a battle of proverbs is carried on. There is bold sparring by the keenest witted while everyone in the crowded cottage has a lively appreciation of each shade of implication. The time came when the land that had been given to these people by word of honour, though not by written deed, was taken from them that sheep might graze where men and women had valiantly contrived to live. Human beings possessing many graces were evicted from their homes with every aggravation

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of brutality. This part of the story is as heartrendingly dramatic as the most sombre of the Scottish ballads. In exchange for their holdings they were given land near the sea where even sheep could not live and where they perched and suffered like storm-driven birds. Mr. Gunn tells of the wrongs of his people with a noble beauty.

*Who Once Eats Out of the Tin Bowl* is a story of a German convict prison. It makes terrifying reading. The style is so starkly convincing that one accepts the account as truth and is in prison oneself, hearing foul words, breathing stench, and trying to do every prisoner, warder and official, since they are all trying to do you. One learns the terror of going out into a world one has not seen for years, one has the perfectly justified loathing of mankind, one knows the impossibility of concealing your prison background, the vituperation which greets you when it becomes known, the inevitable return to crime as the only means of wresting a living from a society in which one has no place, and at last one returns to prison and finds the deep relief it brings. After reading this book one has been a criminal. Surely never before the torrent of fiction in which we now live have we known the actuality of lives so widely removed from our own. If we are not our brother's keeper we no longer have the excuse of not knowing his needs.

MAN OF ARAN. By PAT MULLEN. Faber. 8s. 6d.

THERE was a good deal of criticism of Mr. Robert Flaherty's film, *The Man of Aran*. Some people said there should have been a story; others wrote letters saying that life on the Aran Islands was not at all as photographed: that the men of Aran did not hunt shark but mackerel, nor make gardens out of laboriously acquired sand.

Now Mr. Pat Mullen comes along

with a book which may primarily be described as the inside history of the taking of the film. Mr. Mullen acted as contact man between Flaherty and the Islanders, and there would appear to have been need for such a medium. For, contrary to the most plausible notion, the Islanders did not at first consider the arrival of the motion camera in their midst as a straight and easy path to fortune. Poor as they were, their minds still held the fear of the Protestant soupers or proselytizers who after the Great Famine attempted the work of conversion with plates of soup for the starving; and they wondered if Mr. Flaherty were another of the same brood. Also there were rumours that he was a Socialist, and though few were troubled by any theories of political economy there was the strong impression that Socialism was an organization backed by the devil. The mother of Michael, the pretty curly-haired child in the film, took months before she could be persuaded to consent to his inclusion in the cast. Later, of course, all that was changed: it was a trouble for Mr. Mullen to deal tactfully with the number of applicants who didn't see why they shouldn't have their share of the pickings. Relatives, however distant, came to him in anger complaining, 'Sure we never heard of any man that didn't give his own relatives the first chance when a shilling was to be earned.'

But Mr. Mullen was obviously the right man for the work. He is a returned American; and it is obvious that the excitements incurred in the making of the film were like strong wine after a prolonged diet of potatoes and milk. He admits that he even took chances with human life during certain of the storm scenes so that the prowess and endurance of the Islanders should be fittingly portrayed. And he infected the others with his enthusiasm. When basking shark were sighted, it occurred naturally to the film

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mind that the harpooning and capture of an immense shark would add to the dramatic value of the picture, so there was an immediate revival of the old shark hunting days. In public houses men drank pints of porter. 'Here's hoping for the seventy-five foot shark,' though none of them had the slightest experience of harpooning, and an old man almost on his death-bed had to be sought out to obtain information as to how the Levawn Mor, as it used to be called, was best captured. But their courage stood to them, and actually the film gives little idea of the extraordinary risks that were taken so that the bravery and skill of the men of Aran should go out to the great world.

Mr. Mullen, who is obviously a remarkable man, tells the story with simplicity and with humorous appreciation of the foibles of his people. For the rest, most of the actors are back in Aran: thus their saga is ended, but the hard struggle for existence still goes on. With this difference: Maggie, who was, as she told an acquaintance, very poor till Mr. Flaherty came, and, indeed, had to be fattened up before her camera tests were satisfactory, can now look to the future with a feeling of security, and most of the others have for the first time in their lives saved money.

FREEDOM AND ORGANISATION, 1814-1914.  
By BERTRAND RUSSELL. Allen & Unwin. 15s.

BERTRAND RUSSELL has lifted a section out of time. Imprisoned in its years there are to be seen through the pellucid but infinitesimally distorting glass of his style men writing, thinking, acting, living as individuals: and in the same glance the same men as each a cell half-conscious in the blind growth of some movement whose shape, now frozen into the past, can

finally be generalized and limited in a name.

His subject is in effect the transition from one form of tyranny to another: the development of the popular revolt against the personal tyranny of kings into the impersonal tyranny of the corporate state: the transformation of the democratic revolt against the intellectual tyranny that forbade the expression of political thought into an emotional tyranny which, since it saw the nation incarnate in its citizens, came to demand of every individual that he should inflame his inner mind to order, in the name of patriotism, with exultation, pride and hatred: the culmination of the revolt of the individualist trader against the authoritative economy of the Middle Ages in the vast complex mindless tyranny of modern capitalism.

He begins after the Napoleonic wars with an account of the Congress of Vienna (whose members are displayed with the subtle immediate truth of good caricature), settling the boundaries of the European nations according to the principle of legitimacy. Of this he provides a succinct definition, contrasting it with that principle of self-determination which, even more thoroughly, diluted with expediency, was applied to the same problem a century afterwards. 'Roughly speaking,' he says 'territory was treated as we still treat landed estate: we do not think that the tenants of a landowner can acquire a right to own the land on which they live merely by deciding that they would like to do so.'

Germany, however, after suffering 200 years of intermittent French invasion, desired rather the centralized unity necessary for war than that variety in which civilization is rooted; and therefore was led by Prussia to oppose the principle of legitimacy which would perpetuate the diffusion of its power in innumerable small principedoms. The protest was unsuccessful for the time being; but the

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romantic movement in Germany glowed fiercely with the stern heat of the new doctrines; and German nationalism was thus linked from the beginning with ideals of racial frontiers and of military glory.

Mr. Russell next sets out the English social background of the time: the intelligent, tolerant, cultivated and deliberately unimaginative Whig aristocracy: the protectionist landowners using the Enclosure Acts to dispossess the peasantry in the interests of improved agriculture and enriched magnates: the free trade manufacturers working tormented children to death for the highly moral reason that 'economic laws' must be fulfilled (the earliest attempt to justify cruelty by regarding live persons as abstract units mechanically controlled by calculable forces).

Arising from this scene, and as closely interconnected with its gradually changing aspect as rainfall with vegetation, he shows the theories of the time, their slow expression in life and the extraordinary way in which, once in action, they tended inevitably to the destruction of their own first principles. The Utilitarians, for instance (an earlier school of Behaviourists), assumed the equality of man, and grounded upon it their belief that, given an education in benevolent self-interest, peace, free trade and general prosperity would result from the practice of *laissez-faire*. Exhaling throughout the early nineteenth century a mental atmosphere in which the desirability of free competition was axiomatic, they inspired Darwin to 'apply Benthamite economics to the animal world' and in the *Origin of Species* to propound the theory that 'all animals are engaged in the struggle to procure a livelihood, and those that have most thoroughly acquired the principles of Smiles' *Self-Help* survive and found families, while the rest perish. Hence . . . the cleverest animals gradually oust the stupid ones till at last we arrive at man.'

The theory of evolution, however, depending as it did upon the fact of heredity, proved to the philosophers what every person of common sense had always known: that men are not born equal. The doctrine of the struggle for existence gave to war a biological halo which Sir Arthur Keith and his followers keep well polished to this day: and the conception of the survival of the fittest both inflated national pride and stimulated imperialism to the sanctimonious exploitation of 'the lesser breeds without the law.'

Mr. Russell then traces the development of social philosophy in America. In politics, eighteenth-century liberalism with its theory that 'on the one hand government should be democratic; on the other hand there should be as little government as possible' was defeated in the name of freedom by the Civil War; which, hinging emotionally upon the question of slavery, in fact decided the issues between localization and centralization, between agriculture and industrialism. In economics the principle of free competition was hastened by the perfecting of large-scale organization into its logical conclusion: the victory of the least scrupulous competitors and their establishment of monopoly.

The last chapters are devoted to the process which changed the Liberal creed that 'every country must be free to achieve its legitimate ambitions' into the patriotic slogan '*My* country must be free to achieve its ambitions, legitimate or not.' The hardening of nationalism after 1870 is described, and the growth of imperialism, and there are a number of sketches, in swift, true, bitter outline, of the arbiters of Europe before the Great War.

Mr Russell traces the complex interlocking developments of a hundred years with the clean accuracy of a graph, with the rich and relevant detail of extraordinary learning, and with the generalizing power of a great historian he is, more-

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over, acutely aware, as are few modern historians, of the immense fortuitous influence of individuals. He is conscientiously detached, and contrives to maintain a true impartiality as to movements, philosophies, and points of view (the passages relating to the growth of Socialism, for instance, are admirable in objective clarity): but he cannot credit the sincerity of any man actuated by religious motives, nor attribute altruism to any of the inhabitants of his period except Robert Owen and E. D. Morel.

EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-1849. By DAME UNA POPE-HENNESSY. Macmillan. 10s. 6d.

EDGAR ALLAN POE can have no great appeal in a literary period which has discovered for itself the doctrine of escape. Nowadays we regard imaginative exploration as inconsistent with a poet's public duty. Poe, certainly, tried to do his duty and anticipate Mr. Mencken, for he made many attempts to found a high-class American review. But in his extreme cult of imagination he escaped from the drab transitional American life of his time, and in his poems, short stories and æsthetic theories linked the past and future.

Dame Una Pope-Hennessy can scarcely be blamed if there is little new to be said about Poe. Her book is compact, comprehensive, and she takes us enthusiastically over familiar ground. Her work has one advantage over the standard biographies: it has been written since the publication of the *Valentine Museum Letters*. The letters intensify our knowledge of Poe's domestic life and some of them reveal the astonishing precocity of his poetic gift. To most of us Poe has always seemed peculiarly American in his characteristics, and his imaginative spirituality seemed appropriate to a country which specialized in transcendentalism. His adaptations of European romanticism,

his pseudo-classicism, his search for novelty, even the mechanics of his best-known poems seemed to suggest a new febrile civilization. Dame Una, however, regards him as an alien genius in that new world. Her suggestion of a Jewish strain in the poet is interesting, but her deductions seem rather far-fetched in a century before Nazism.

May not the existence of an Oriental strain and the subconscious recognition in him of that strain have created among literary men in America the attitude of hostility that was always latent towards one who was not essentially of their stock? May not also the desire apparent in the works of modern historians of American literature to tuck Poe away almost out of sight be due to the same instinct? Poe does no credit to the American tradition, he does not fit in anywhere. He began and ended with himself, and though ceaselessly parodied in life he founded no school of poetry in his own land.

But one might mention amongst those who followed him, a poet and theorist such as Sidney Lanier.

The stark tragedy of Poe's struggle for the barest existence is described in these pages with a wealth of sympathy. Dame Una calls to mind the sympathetic friends who enabled Coleridge to live with tolerable peace among his metaphysical fancies, but she does not quite grasp the situation. As a man of genius, Poe committed the tactical error of showing his amazing practicality. The popular literary magazines which he edited trebled their circulation as soon as he touched them. Unfortunately, the alternating clash between his creative and critical powers, aggravated by his drinking and drug habits, rendered him incapable of satisfying the business men who were willing to exploit him. The new letters bring out clearly the disastrous conflict

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between Poe as a youth and John Allan, who had adopted him. Dame Una describes in harrowing detail his later struggle to support his consumptive child-wife, Virginia, and her mother, Mrs. Clemm. However great his faults, Poe emerges with honour. In witty and spirited chapters, Dame Una describes the American salons of the period, and the bevy of blue-stockings and poetesses that flourished in New York. The romantic author of *The Raven* undermined his own popularity for he attacked in a famous series of criticism the egregious celebrities and *litterati* of his day. When the little family was on the verge of starvation, Mrs. Clemm endeavoured to persuade her 'Eddie' to review and edit the effusions of these poetesses who were willing to buy his opinion. But he could not still his critical conscience.

A HISTORY OF SECULAR LATIN POETRY IN  
THE MIDDLE AGES. By F. J. E. RABY.  
Two vols. Clarendon Press. 35s.

PROBABLY there are at most two or three scholars in this country competent to criticize Mr. Raby's work adequately. Yet anyone with even a slight knowledge of mediæval Latin must appreciate the value of this work, which is no less than an encyclopædia and anthology (by far the most extensive known to me) of Latin verse from the third to the thirteenth century, and verse in that period means very much more, and less, than poetry. Mr. Raby is a literary historian and keeps strictly to the matter in hand: his method is to give a description of each writer followed by ample quotations and references which the reader may follow up at his leisure. In this vast forest he picks his way with care, and where he has to plod, plods cheerfully and takes the reader with him. Yet some trees are lost sight of: in a work of more than 750 pages,

Boethius deserves more than three, and his *O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas*, one of the finest philosophic poems of the period, is not quoted, while the poet in Bernard of Cluny is lost sight of in the ingenious versifier. But these are small faults in a book which has not been written before in English and will not need to be written again for a very long time.

In large tracts of these volumes there is little poetry to be found – there is much more in the author's *Christian Latin Poetry* – but plenty to interest the student of *Kulturgeschichte*. The directing force of the age, after the Church, was the rhetorical tradition, which kept the content in perpetual subservience to the form: verse was judged by extraneous tests – metrical ingenuity (which was needed to introduce a name like Chrodrudta into a hexameter), acrostical skill, the number of quotations and sometimes by its obscurity. Yet this rigid tradition was essential to the maintenance of culture in Europe: anything more flexible, more capable of poetry might well have failed. The history of the early ages is that of a tradition untainted by contact with genuine emotions or new ideas, and broken by occasional rebels, and where there was rebellion, there was hope of poetry. Religion was one of the few forces strong enough to break it: Venantius Fortunatus, a writer of pleasant occasional verses, is a new voice in poetry when he writes the *Pange, lingua*, that hymn to the cross which is at once the Tree of Eden and the Tree Igdrasil. But it was the veneration for a culture its admirers could not understand that made possible the *Carmina Burana* and the *Dies Irae*. With Alcuin and his friends a new age begins: Latin has almost to be learnt again, at least to be rediscovered, and the fatal fluency is gone. The language recovers some of its hardness and weight, and the poems of Angilbert on Fontenoy or of

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Walafrid Strabo on his garden are new creations. The same directness and freshness of vision is in the *Cambridge Songs*.—

*'Cum mihi sola sedeo  
Et hec revolvens palleo,  
Si forte caput sublevo,  
Nec audio nee video.'*

That is more like early Greek than any Latin written before. Yet the old tradition survives and one of the pleasantest lines in the book is that of the all too conscious poet advertising his tepid elegiacs with

*'Sum sum sum vates, Musarum servo  
penates'*

Yet the *Cambridge Songs* are only the prelude to the twelfth century. The poised and flawless rhymes of Adam of St Victor take the place of the charming, stammering rhythms of Notker; and in secular poetry the change is not less complete nor the mastery of the language less sure. Verse then served every turn — history, philosophy, comedy, grammar, theology all were fit subjects for the poet and one man, as did Walter of Chatillon, might begin 'before he had arrived at the time of repentance' as a writer of lyrics or satire and, taking the rest in his stride, end up as a hymnologist: he may have been the inventor of the Goliardic measure, the rhythm of *'Meum est propositum,'* a measure not borrowed from, but lent to the Church. It is the age of the Primas of Orleans and of the Archpoet, and with these Mr. Raby deals faithfully and well: but the greatest poetic achievement of the period comes later with the songs of Benediktbeuern. The love lyric finds a new freedom and range, and the reader finally loses the uncomfortable impression that it is the same lady, down to the last physical detail, that every writer of the last thousand years has been describing, and at the same time the *pastourelle* ceases to be

the only accepted form of the love poem. Equal in surety and lightness are some of the lyrics of the MS. of Ripoll: the writer of

*Sidus clarum  
puellarum  
flos et decus omnium,  
rosa veris  
quae videris  
Clarior quam liliū —*

had little to learn. Yet these poems remain 'popular poetry' (to use Mr. Raby's term) for all their beauty, conventional in theme and simple in treatment: it is as though English poetry had never reached beyond the lovely songs in *England's Helicon* to the tragedy and the sonnet. The deepest poetical feeling of the Middle Ages is in the hymns of the Church.

Not a little of the charm of Mr. Raby's work lies in the oddities and absurdities of some of his material. There is the superb Defence of Baldness written by Hucbald of St Amand in a most arresting manner, every word of which begins with the letter C: it is hoped that the Archbishop to whom he dedicated it and whom he addressed in the preface as *'Calvorum gloria, Calvi'* remembered him well. There is the story, told in lively hexameters, of the Fasting Wolf and the Catholic Calf and the hedgehog who claimed descent from Cato: in *Ruodlieb* the dwarfs and magicians whose proper home is in the forests of Germany are translated into Latin and gain rather than lose in the process: there is the astonishment of Peter of Eboli at Puteoli reflecting that beneficent waters spring from the abode of torment — *a tormentorum provenit aede salus*. It is difficult to stop quotation: there is enough for a winter's reading. Mr. Raby does not evade any difficulties: but after discussing the origin of the lyric, he remarks, 'little remains except to read the poems and enjoy them.' As an aid to this object, his book is admirable: the right

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way to carry it out would be to have the *Patrologia Latina* on one side of the fire, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (and a few more books cited in the bibliography) on the other, and to say that Mr. Raby's two volumes would then be an invaluable guide is perhaps the highest compliment one can pay him.

NEW PATHS IN BOOK-COLLECTING. Edited by JOHN CARTER. Constable. 10s.

BIBLIOGRAPHY is one of the few sciences left to us in an age when most of the exact sciences, except theology, are tainted by relativity. The bibliographer is confronted by the danger of the forger, the peril of the occasional pirate, the impudence of the false ascription (did not that rogue d'Hancarville pretend his impudicities came *ex typis Vaticanis?*); but once he has cleared away the rubbish he has a sound path to tread. Accuracy and a completeness, either implicit or stated, are not difficult for the hard worker; and gross errors, even for the amateur, are easy to discern. For instance, a man who writes of popular, cheap editions and begins with *Everyman's Library* is a convinced charlatan; and one writing of popular publishing who does not mention Lackington, Bohn or Nimmo can be dismissed as an ignoramus. No one in Mr Carter's team comes under either of these condemnations; but there are some sad lapses from strict science. Praise first. Mr. Carter's own essay on *Detective Stories* is excellent: rightly he differentiates the detective story proper from the 'thriller' – though some classical thrillers, such as *The Woman in White*, have a strong element of detection. Mr Carter should have noticed, however, in his note on page 47, that the publishers' label for certain stories of Hilaire Belloc, illustrated by G. K. C., 'Chester-Belloc' was borrowed from Bernard Shaw's invention of that word to describe those Dioscuri, also his

note might mislead the unwary into the belief that G. K. C.'s first illustrations for Belloc were for 'the burlesque detective-story.' He illustrated, years ago, Mr. Belloc's political satires. Mr. Winterich's essay on 'an autumn collection' is a pleasant excursion into a collector's by-way; I wish he had mentioned Mrs. Glaspell's play on Emily Dickinson. Mr. Muir's article on the Anglo-American copyright war is a sound and informative piece of work – is there, however, any evidence that there was an American edition, as distinct from an edition printed in U.S.A., of *The Happy Hypocrite?* – but his essay on War-Books is not really suited for a scientific volume. It is a personal essay with no pretence to completeness, and suffers from grave aversions scarcely redeemed by the self-sacrificing advice to the reader to consult Mr. Cyril Falls. Mr. Oldman's *Musical First Editions* appears to be a satisfactory piece of work; but few ordinary book-collectors will be in a position to judge him. By far the best essay, with Mr. Collier's *Detective Stories*, is Mr. Michael Sadleir's *Yellow-Backs*: it is thorough, readable and extraordinarily well produced, generous in its inclusions and yet never deviating from an enviable accuracy. Mr. Randall's *American First Editions* is an entertaining study in delight and despondency it might have been worth noticing that some of Bernard Shaw's novels are American first editions, and that a rare Stella Benson book can only be obtained in a Californian limited issue. His plea for Ring Lardner and Harry Leon Wilson is welcome; and he might have buttressed it by an advertisement of Dorothy Parker and Djuna Barnes, authors, in their different ways, far more estimable than many more widely collected writers.

Mr. Pollard's article on *Serial Fiction* is very disappointing. He nowhere defines 'serial', he does not tell us how far he is including serial publication subsequent to



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book-publication; and his references to 'part' publication are very unsatisfactory. *Tristram Shandy* was strictly a 'part' publication; the relation between 'part' and 'serial' should have been more closely investigated. His annotated list of A. E. Newton's *Hundred Good Novels* is, however, one of the most unsatisfactory features in his paper. It is, for his purpose, a misleading list. Among Hardy's novels Newton gives *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: can it be this which made Mr. Pollard forget *Far from the Madding Crowd* (as he must) when he wrote 'the book which first made an author's name was hardly ever serialised'? In his notes on the list occur such strangely unscientific assertions as 'Esther Waters . . . probably appeared as a serial, but I have been unable to trace it.' It is extraordinarily unlikely that this novel was serialized; but the fact should be easy to determine. Even easier would it be to discover if *Joanna Godden* came out as a serial: a line to Sheila Kaye-Smith would settle the matter – why then describe the book as 'probably serialized'? while to say bluntly that Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* was never serialized is to give a strangely wrong impression of that posthumously published novel.

Far worse, however, than Mr. Pollard's essay is Mr. Balston's on *English Illustrated Books*, 1880–1900. It is his own concern that he chose so capricious a period – 1880–1910, or even to 1920, would have given him a far less difficult task – for he stops just short of the great development of colour-printing fomented by the three-colour process. His essay contains errors, not only of omission. His description of the *Cranford Series* is accurate so far as the more popular form is concerned; but he does not mention that all the early volumes were issued in dark blue buckram, paper label, and edges uncut. His description of the binding of the *Highways and By-ways* series is wrong. These books were issued in green silk-cloth, with flat

backs; the dark blue binding he dislikes did not appear till much later, indeed, after his terminal date. Dent, and not Lane, published Beardsley's *Bon-Mots*: Lane published no book of Beardsley's except *Salomé* and the first four *Yellow-Books*. Phil May's volumes may be 'rather collections of drawings than illustrated books,' but there are his annuals, there is Frank Burnand's *Zig-Zag Guide to Kent* and there is *The Parson and the Painter*. Mr. Balston's handling of the Birmingham school is woefully inadequate; there is no mention of Gaskin's *Hans Andersen* or the Carol Book; while his sensitiveness to style can be judged from his astounding statement that 'nearest to the Thomson school, but with a considerable admixture of the more formal and archaistic tendencies of Crane, were the children's book artists such as H. J. Ford and J. D. Batten.' Batten, owing a little to Howard Pyle, a little to Beardsley and much to his own fancy, is as far away from Hugh Thomson as he is from Ford, whose work is elegantly tormented sugar. Mr. Balston's omissions are astounding. He has no word about Charles Conder, about A. B. Frost, Gordon Browne, Gilbert James, J. F. Sullivan, Greiffenhagen, Vierge, William Hyde, S. H. Sime among artists: while among publishers of illustrated books there is no word of Gibbings, who employed Brangwyn, or of Nimmo, who resisted cheap process-work in his fine editions. Most surprising of all, in an essay on collecting, is the absence of information about magazines such as the *Idler* and the *Butterfly*.

JAMES I. By CHARLES WILLIAMS. Arthur Barker. 10s.

THERE are a few things that everybody knows about King James VI of Scotland and I of England who first united the kingdoms of this island. He was son of

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the beautiful and tragic Mary. He was the wisest fool in Christendom. He wore

‘a quilted doublet and great trunk-breeches,  
And held in abhorrence tobacco and  
witches.’

He appears abruptly, a shambling comic figure, in the sad and stately procession of the Stewarts. . . . But – and the conjunction rises to capitals as one looks at history – he held his own through almost the longest and loneliest, and certainly not the least dangerous, of the stormy range of the Stewart minorities. Save for the ghostly unhappy dignity of the two Roberts at the very beginning (who both came to the throne in late middle life), he was the longest-lived of the Stewart sovereigns. And he died peaceably in his bed after a reign reasonably successful in itself, astoundingly so when one looks at the conditions in both kingdoms. It is all very odd: and in the recent revaluation of the Stewarts, that is part of the post-war escape from the neat complacent tradition of Macaulay, it is inevitable that he should be studied, and no less inevitable that the historian who attempts a coherent story of his life should feel as Burton did over David II and give it up as too much for mortal man.

Mr. Williams has persevered, with happy results. He has a scholarly knowledge of the time, a sense of those strange smoky antinomies, of hell-fire and star-light and broad tallowy farce that clash so wildly in the age's drama: he writes a trim prose, salted with a wit whose balanced word-play is based on a sense of idea beyond the word, and his pervading irony is not mere buckram to support his own superiority to a world where men only do things, not write about them, but a relishing savour of the inherencies of his subject-matter. He can create an episode: the mad murderous business of the Gowrie Plot is like a scene from a lost play of

Middleton. Above all, he is intensely interested in the personality he is seeking to trace. The book has the gusto without which history is a pedant's diagram, more or less gracefully printed, and quite flat. King James

loved ease and peace, but if he were stirred he was capable of carrying himself with dignity, at the head of his troops or alone. He loved loose freedoms and gross pleasures, yet he never lost himself in them. He loved arguments and theological hair-splitting, yet he had at any moment that sense of actuality which is rare in such theoretical minds. He loved idleness and pleasure, but when he was rebuked for it he answered by saying that he did more work in an hour than others in a day. . . . And as in labour so in temper. He was good-humoured and kindly and loved it in others, but if his spiritual nerves were touched, especially the nerve of his kingship . . . he was capable of spasms of vengeful cruelty, and of disguising them from himself.

That is no bad summary. The rest of the book is the data on which it is based, from the storm that caught him even before his birth, on the wild March night of 1566: the coil of hard strife that was his minority in a country where the abduction of minor sovereigns had a recognized status as a nobleman's sport, and several not remarkably scrupulous monarchs felt a passionate interest in his life – or death; the jars of his earlier reign, between Kirk and nobles and three or four foreign Powers; the apparent peace and increasing complications of his second kingdom; and the growing in both of those fierce elements that yet, somehow, did not clash until he was dead. He came through it, respected by few, yet those not fools; successful surprisingly; always, under his folly, with an uncommonly sane sense of fact, unusual in an age as blown by winds of doctrine

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as our own, and with more men ready to die, or to put to death, for doctrine than nowadays, at least in this country. The tale of it all, being free from the limits of fiction, is more lurid than most historical novels dare be: and it gives one the sense that under his careful fact Mr. Williams has come very near its truth and colour.

A PRINTER OF SHAKESPEARE By EDWIN E. WILLOUGHBY. Philip Allan. 21s.

SHAKESPEARE. By GEORGE SAINTSBURY. Cambridge University Press. 3s 6d.

THE NEW TEMPLE SHAKESPEARE. Edited By M. R. RIDLEY. 8 volumes Dent. 2s each.

SHAKESPEARE himself still defies our further curiosity even our sharpest investigators, poring over records, can as a rule only hope to find something new about someone whom Shakespeare met. So the ardent Shakespearean is, to ease his itch for information, bound to go adventuring after the men connected with Shakespeare – where there is still work to be done. The work thus done will always find readers, and Mr. Willoughby's book is an excellent example of that careful American scholarship to which we and Shakespeare by now owe a good deal. His book is about William Jaggard, a printer and publisher of whom no one but the scholars of minutiae would ever care had he not printed the First Folio of Shakespeare's works. We are apt to forget how great a boon this was. Not only did it secure the existence of plays otherwise unknown; it was Jaggard's publication which first challenged the world of letters to esteem the great dramatist at his proper worth. The enterprize was a risk. Shakespeare was dead. Folios were expensive to produce, and expensive to buy. There is no strictly modern parallel to such an enterprize as Jaggard's; but one can be fancied. If Charles Dickens had

had most of his works printed in parts only, and never collected in volumes; if also he had not printed some at all, but only read them to those startled audiences which gathered in crowds to be stirred to horror, laughter and tears by his acting – then, had some publisher, five years after his death, have risked a capital sum on the production of a collected edition, it would have been a parallel to Jaggard's action.

Except for this one audacity, the man was an ordinary enough printer – erring sometimes on the other side of honesty, quick at a bargain, eager to better his rivals, ready to print good things and bad, a thought quarrelsome, and not at all an incompetent opponent. Before he started on the Folio he was blind, and he reminded an enemy who was mean enough to taunt him with his blindness, that though Homer was blind and a poet, he was not a blind-poet. Mr. Willoughby points out that his list of publications included less theology and transient religious controversy than was common in those days; and it is to Jaggard we owe those fascinating books of Topsell's in which we may learn how a bull's liver, hot, cures the toothache, and how elephants have pined away and died for love of a lady, and she a Syrian 'who failed not to frame for the elephant amorous devices with Beads and corals, silver and such things as are grateful to these brute beasts.' It is good that Jaggard should have his grateful tribute in Mr. Willoughby's book, which those familiar with the academies of America will notice with pleasure comes from a professor in the college of William and Mary, in the famous city of Williamsburg, of the great land of Virginia.

No better account of Shakespeare, none more succinct, none freer from idle imaginings, more just in its apprehension, has been written than George Saintsbury's two chapters in the Cambridge *History of English Literature*. Now we have those chapters, separated for the moment from

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their native company, in an excellent little volume. Re-reading them, the student who frets at the fringes of his subject will once more admire the scholarship, the intimate ease, the probing sense, the infallible direction of the great scholar. Here is biography as masterly as one could wish – not a point missed, and nothing exaggerated. With a brevity that equals the master's Miss Helen Weddell has written as introduction a note on Saintsbury. It is a gem of imaginative criticism, sympathetic in approach, delicate in statement, shrewd in apprehension. Had Saintsbury guessed that this pen might have been devoted to the raising of a monument to his memory, would he have persisted in his determination to avoid the difficult honour of a biography? There was something Johnsonian in this man; and in his power to appreciate the works of authors from whose principles he differed, and of whose practice he often disapproved, he excelled his great exemplar. It is a loss to letters that he should lack a Boswell.

*The New Temple Shakespeare* will be greeted with delight by those who know, and many who have never seen, the old. Eight volumes are now ready. They are exquisitely convenient in size, clear in print, and adorned with decorative designs by Eric Gill which contain the very fire of the Renaissance. Mr. Ridley's introductory matter and notes are, in their kind, models of compression. Some will be sorry that he has modernized the spelling – the Nonesuch edition showed how much is gained by keeping to the old – and it is a pity to introduce so doubtful a suggestion as 'sullied' for 'solid' (in O!) that this too, too solid flesh would melt) into a satisfactory text. His prefaces are free from speculative ingenuities; but he gives at the end of each introduction some excerpts from famous criticisms. This is a doubtful blessing. If it were to be done, however, it should

have been done more boldly. What use is a feature of this kind in such an edition, if it be not supplied at all in the *Sonnets*, about which opinion has varied more than about anything of Shakespeares? There was no need to quote such nonsense as that of the purblind commentators who suggested that the *Sonnets* are mere exercises after Italian models, and following a modern custom; but this edition of the *Sonnets* leaves the young student, for whom the edition is presumably intended, with the idea that no one has ever said anything about this problem. It was an admirable idea to adopt Sir Denis Bray's order for the *Sonnets*: the neglect of his enterprising little edition by most of the academic Shakespearean scholars is thus redeemed. It is easily the most important contribution to Shakespearean scholarship of our time. Whatever order is right, the order of 1609 is as wrong as it is unauthoritative; and no one has suggested so good an order, or one so based on scientific principles, as Sir Denis Bray's.

The eight volumes published of the new edition include, beside the *Sonnets*, *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, *Titus Andronicus*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Coriolanus*: the edition is to be completed in forty volumes, issued at the rate of two a month. It should be as successful as the old Temple, of which over five million copies have been sold.

BERLIOZ: THE MAN AND HIS WORK. By W. J. TURNER. Dent. 10s. 6d.

CHOPIN: HIS LIFE. By WILLIAM MURDOCH. John Murray. 16s.

A WELL-BALANCED study of Berlioz has long been needed; unfortunately the need has not been satisfied by Mr. W. J. Turner's *Berlioz: The Man and His Work*. Biographically, it is no more than competent. It narrates the chief events of the composer's life, gives him his right setting,

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quotes freely and aptly from Berlioz's own *Mémoires* and letters, and shows him in relation to his contemporaries; and as Mr. Turner does not claim to have had access to fresh material nor to throw new light on old, we are so far content. The claim he does make is much more ambitious. 'It is the purpose of this book,' he says, 'to set Berlioz in full view as the greatest creative force in music that has so far appeared since the death of Beethoven.'

Alas, in the heat of his enthusiasm, Mr. Turner seems to have shed his gift for critical analysis, and is at so great pains to convict Berlioz's detractors of stupidity or malice that his arguments peter out in wild asseverations and his exegesis resolves itself into that very jargon of the programme annotator which he himself finds unreadable. One looks for a revelation and is fobbed off with the dithyramb and periphrasis peculiar to writers of musical journalism. We are told that a movement 'is revealed in all its originality and beauty,' but are given no hint of the nature of the beauty or of the originality which are so revealed. Another work is labelled masterpiece, 'so original, so utterly unlike anything else in music,' but the notes on the work which Mr. Turner vouchsafes are no more significant than any competent programme annotator could supply – the titles, the instruments employed, and so forth.

There must be good reasons why the music of Berlioz, in spite of the enthusiastic advocacy of its admirers, remains comparatively little known and relatively seldom performed. There is the practical reason that his major works demand resources which are only rarely available – vast orchestras, great choirs, special positions and unconventional settings; but a more cogent reason is the fact, perhaps regrettable, certainly undeniable, that much of Berlioz's music is antipathetic to many musicians and music-lovers who, though fully alive to his

miraculous ingenuity and inventiveness, find many of his themes commonplace or unattractive, his methods extravagant, his forms cumbersome and not infrequently pretentious. If these objections are based on a lack of understanding, ardent advocacy like Mr. Turner's should include an attempt to persuade and enlighten. 'Berlioz's music is still as incomprehensible to these fatheads,' says Mr. Turner in an elegant passage, 'as it was to the fattest of academic heads during his youth.' But what does he do to reduce the bulk of these fatheads? He shirks almost every opportunity offered him. 'I do not propose to say much about the *Symphonie Fantastique*, having given Berlioz's own analysis of it' But why not? Here is a work which many concert-goers and listeners-in have had a chance of hearing and to whom an illuminating analysis by an ardent admirer would be invaluable, enabling them to confirm or correct their own judgment.

The sobriety and modesty of Mr. William Murdoch's *Life of Chopin* is in pleasant contrast. He makes no claims, but sets about his task of retelling the story of that loneliest of musical geniuses. Being himself a pianist of respectable achievement, he is well-equipped to estimate Chopin's work, and although in this volume he confines himself to a biographical narrative, leaving consideration of the compositions for a subsequent volume, such allusions as he makes to Chopin's accomplishment are founded on an intimate knowledge of his works. In recent years a number of Chopin's letters have been unearthed and certain facts have been disclosed about his parentage which prove this most patriotic of Poles to have been entirely French on his father's side. Mr. Murdoch, sifting this and the old material with care, has written a lively and readable biography. Although it is clear that he finds George Sand fundamentally antipathetic, he is

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fair to her and gives chapter and verse in support of his point of view; nor does he blind himself to Chopin's weaknesses, going farther than some of us would in stressing them. Somewhat irrelevant are his copious references to contemporary pianists; nobody interested in pianoforte literature will grudge him these diversions.

ARTISTS IN UNIFORM. By MAX EASTMAN.  
Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.

A LITTLE over a year ago Messrs. Wishart published an anthology of Soviet literature. It was, apparently, the first collection of the sort to appear in English; and many readers, for whom anthologies represent the worst sort of boredom, turned to this one with interest. They hoped, perhaps, to get an inkling of that 'truth' about Russia which text-books and travellers' tales have so far failed to give us; or remembering the splendid films which Russia was producing a few years ago, they expected something of the same quality in the work of Soviet writers and poets. Alas for such hopes; there was less of new art in the volume than in the pre-war Marinetti. A crude realism and an even cruder futurism seemed the extent of achievement; the proletcult turned out to be more boring and a great deal less efficient than Mr. Walpole's Book Society. There were, of course, pieces by individual writers which were extremely interesting in themselves; but the collection as a whole was a failure. It was an exceedingly bad advertisement for the doctrine of communal effort, to which the writer, like everyone else, is subjected in Russia; no single movement, no vital direction of ideas, was apparent at all; there was not even the uniformity one might have admired in drilled cohorts. To anyone who read the book with a detached eye, it presented the melancholy spectacle of a number of novelists and poets who found themselves capable, neither of working

together to a common effect (as a film, for example, is made), nor of striking out for themselves. The individual had been suppressed for the good of the community; but there was no community worth speaking of.

An elucidation of this state of affairs was provided in a long and interesting preface which traced the history of literature in Russia since the Revolution. The author was, it is needless to say, a Communist, he had the manner all right, but the facts which he presented were in violent contrast to the party zeal and automatic huzzahing which we have come to recognize as the distinguishing marks of these so-called 'scientific' thinkers. It was a dismal record of persecutions, suicides, failures. One after another the leading poets, driven mad by this new inquisition, ceased from writing and killed themselves. Some managed to survive and found an audience for their verses among drunkards and prostitutes. All of these, it may be said, were exceptions; they were, in fact, the exceptionally good, the very best writers in the country; and that is the damning single impression which remained after reading, and forgetting, the book.

The story is taken up now by Mr. Max Eastman. His *Artists in Uniform* has the sub-title 'A Study of Bureaucratism and Literature,' and it is the most smashing attack that has yet been made by a Marxian on the Soviet dictatorship of literature. In the second part of his book, called 'A Literary Inquisition,' he gives us the tragic histories of Yessenin, Kuznetsov, Maiakovsky, Zamyatin, Pilnyak, Polonsky and others. It is impossible to read these chapters without feeling a bitter contempt for the stupidity of the Soviet ruling mind. Art can be a class weapon – but it must be wielded by the artist and not the bureaucrat. The regimentation of poets along a 'workers' front', with full proletarian kit and marching orders, is in itself

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so gross an absurdity that one might not expect to find it outside the pages of Utopian fantasy. Yet this has been the official policy of the Russian Communist Party; and only its failure has caused, in the last few years, a modification of this policy. Even Stalin, whose ideas on the question of art and propaganda seem to be on a level rather below Hitler's, could see that his system did not work. Some degree of licence has been allowed to the artist; the great art of the past is beginning to get an official recognition, because it so obviously belongs to the life of the people; the children are to be given back their dolls.

In contrast to Stalin, Mr. Eastman quotes the views of Lenin and Trotsky (he is himself a Trotskyite). Lenin is reported as having said to Clara Zetlin: 'Every artist, everybody who wishes to, can claim the right to create freely according to his ideal, whether it turn out good or bad.' And Trotsky wrote in his *Literatur and Revolution*:—

Art must make its own way and by its own means. . . . The party leads the proletariat, but not the basic processes of history. There are domains in which the party leads, directly and imperatively. There are domains in which it only co-operates. There are, finally, domains in which it only orientates itself. The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help, but it can only lead indirectly. . . .

At the end of his book Mr. Eastman reprints a long essay, by Vyacheslav Polonsky, on 'Lenin's Views of Art and Culture,' which is worth reading.

*Artists in Uniform* is an uncompromising, and often brilliant, attack not only on Soviet bureaucrats, but on the modish demi-intellectual Bohemians in England

and America who look to Russia as the Holy Land. The fact that Mr. Eastman is himself a completely honest and unusually intelligent Marxist adds weight to his onslaught. He knows Russia, he has met most of the writers he discusses (his portrait of Maiakovsky, for example, is remarkably good), he is a fierce and able dialectician. As a piece of debunking, *Artists in Uniform* is as effective as it is badly needed. The book is directed primarily against soft-headed Communists all the world over, and in Russia and America particularly, but it should be read by everyone who is concerned for the freedom of the artist.

IN THE STEPS OF THE MASTER. By H. V. MORTON. Rich & Cowan. 7s. 6d.

EACH people 'has translated the life of Christ into its own pictorial idiom.' The names of remote Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem have been fitted into familiar landscapes, and untravelled generations have understood the Incarnation in terms of their own daily monotonous bored lives. In England, though the Madonna has been conventionalized in the blue robes, the flat gilt halo, of mediæval art, the hay, the warm mist-breathing beasts, the stars, the snow, the trees 'all frozen and bare' are things habitually known, newly realized in radiance. In Germany the 'Child with the golden hair' stands beside a triangular green Christmas tree: our Lady in her cathedral at Naples looks up against an Italian drop-scene, a sleekly painted peasant-girl crowned with electric lights: El Greco shows an emaciated Spaniard, ecstatic in Deity: and in Africa the Holy Family, thick-lipped and black, push their way through tropical forests.

The general impression conveyed by Mr. Morton's book, with its workmanlike vividness, its careful descriptions, its

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coloured historical detail is that the pilgrim to the Holy Land would do better to stay at home: in Palestine his village vision will be obliterated, and, since the holy places are built over with temples and palaces, Roman and Christian and Mohammedan, there will be no clear-cut reality with which to replace it. The stable-cave of the Nativity is hung with tapestry and ornaments, the Holy Sepulchre itself is isolated in a sheath of marble; not even the small wondering intimacy of touch is possible. Everywhere recollection is impeded by crowds clamorous to sell pious souvenirs, and Roman aqueducts, ancient mosques, Byzantine churches, Moorish synagogues and the great tumble-down castles of the Crusades, all hundreds of lives old, impede the mental sight into the past beyond them. The enormous distances of time and place and circumstance become coldly apparent.

There are, however, various scenes which do illumine and make three-dimensional the biblical narratives. The lake of Galilee, the hills of desolate dusty Judea, the sweltering heat of the Jordan valley have not changed in two thousand years. On the way down to Jericho may yet be seen the inn to which the good Samaritan took his patient and still in Nazareth springs the Virgin's Fountain.

### AT THE PLAY

Do Londoners care about good acting? Or want a sound, diverse, intelligent theatre? If they do – and that some do, the audiences at the Old Vic. are evidence enough – they should rally to the support of Mr. Baxter Somerville's gallant enterprise at the Westminster Theatre. It was here *The Moon in the Yellow River* was produced; here in the last month the play-lover has had the chance of seeing *King Lear* and *Children in Uniform*. Westminster and the Embassy are the only theatres in London, producing a variety of plays, to

which a self-respecting play-goer would cheerfully take a foreign visitor. If they do not succeed, the actors had better go mumping in the streets, or at the house-doors of those remarkable people who are in some obscure way trustees for the cash collected for our National Theatre – to be built presumably on the site of Waterloo Bridge, so that the salved may swim to Surrey side and accept the genial hospitality of Miss Lilian Baylis. The Westminster *King Lear* had astonishing power and beauty: the settings and the production were genuinely ancillary to the play – they neither obscured, vulgarized nor, thank God!, interpreted Shakespeare. They served him. The shadows of the King and of Edgar cast against the blank wall reminded us of the more than life-like character of this play – in its tragedy, its terrible humour, its brutality and its pathos. William Devlin's Lear lacked nothing but height. Would it have been too bold to mount this magnificent young actor on tragic pattens, so that he might, in stature as in spirit, overcome his companions, and when he stooped, stoop from a high place near heaven? He was greatest in his most natural moments – 'Who put my man in the stocks?' had in its tones the outraged surprise of misused majesty; it was only in conflict with the storm that he showed his years a little, and conveyed the tediousness he should have interpreted. Dorothy Green's Goneril had a real quality of self-centred malice; and how excellent was the choice, for Cordelia, of Myrtle Richardson, clad on with the harsh, clear, unmoved justice of a child's positive righteousness. Of the rest, space only allows mention of Alan Wheatley's Edgar, that Franciscan fool, that saint among simpletons who pretends to madness as others to shrewdness, and Neil Porter's Kent, displaying in word and gesture the nobility of an order thrown into confusion by the wild King's caprice.



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When Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, did he ever cast his mind back to his Richard of Bordeaux; that Ernest Dowson of the Shakespearean monarchs? Here, too, is a king dispossessed; dispossessed through his affections, of a different kind from Lear's; a king who is a pitiful self-dramatizer, while Lear is a tragic one; a king who never has had any dignity to lose, but loses beauty and ease as he finds where the primrose path has led him. The production of *Richard II* at the Old Vic was far better than that of *Antony and Cleopatra*: Mr. Cass's simple and swift management was served by a more homogeneous cast, all of whom were more at home in the lyric of unlovely love than in the piled fires of Egypt. Maurice Evans' Richard was a splendid piece of acting – he showed imagination, a careful study of character, and, as a rule, a nice sense of poetry. He should learn, however, that 'dominion' is a quadrisyllable, and that 'patience' is a trisyllable: once at least he mispronounced 'aspect,' and 'record': he was too inclined, when he raved, to shout. Surely Richard's ravings should be malicious, feline, hissed rather than howled – he's no bull, this poor, misplaced, pacific aesthete, but a sleek, comfort-loving, and, when roused, spitting and claw-thrusting leopard. He should pounce, not roar – and in his passionate grief, he might even whine a little. It was a pleasure to see that accomplished actor Alfred Sangster as John of Gaunt: no criticism could be made of his playing, except that the pace of the great dying speeches was rather too quick, not in the production of specific lines, but by the absence of those breath-getting pauses which Gaunt's health demands. Of the other players, special praise is due to Abraham Sofaer's Bolingbroke, and Cecil Trowncr's Bishop of Carlisle; but the Old Vic. should be more careful about its ecclesiastical vestments – the Bishop's huge stole, worn outside a kind of *cappa magna*,

is a garment unknown to anyone outside theatrical wardrobes. One other play of the month must be mentioned – *Miracle in America*, played at the Globe Theatre. This play of Ernst Toller's and Hermann Kesten's is not a very good play: its chronicle character is too loose, and its reliance on documents rather than interpretation too obvious. Still, Dorothy Holmes-Gore as Mrs. Eddy gave a performance of greater strength, magnetism and fire than she has ever before shown signs of – at least on the London stage. She was really possessed – whether by her lust for power, or for money, or for slaves, or by her genuine spark of prophetic fire, kindled at however shabby and obscure an altar. It was a fine, often a great, performance, and should be seen by a larger audience than this enterprising club can supply.

### AT THE PICTURE GALLERIES

PICTURES are very deceptive. After a long time spent in the New English Exhibition, eventually one of the best pictures there seemed to be a portrait, scarcely noticed at the beginning, Miss Ellen Burton's 'Lucy'. But would one care to assert that Miss Burton was a good artist, or even that the picture was a good one? The New English has ceased to be a movement, and its members have little in common beyond inoffensiveness. It has become a minor Academy without the fascinating examples of bad taste which brighten Burlington House. Both institutions, however, perform the very important function of introducing the work of unknown artists. The difficulty is that it is in such small quantities. Non-members are only allowed to submit two works, and are often represented by only one. It is impossible to make a valid judgement from a solitary work. No doubt with perfect training and sensibility we should unfailingly detect the imitation, the hoax, and the fluke. Meanwhile we need to have some idea of

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the artist's work as a whole to appreciate one of his pictures. Were only one of Mr. Carel Weight's pictures to be seen, nothing might be thought of his work; it might even be dismissed as bad. Those who saw his exhibition of forty pictures last month at the Cooling Galleries will be sure that he is an artist with a vision that is singularly fresh and direct. His pictures are happy, a rare and pleasant characteristic. He has not yet evolved a consistent style, and his pictures consequently are very uneven, but seen together it is clear that they are the offspring of one vision, the key to which is in the charming pictures 'Allegro strepitoso' and 'Sun Speed and Steam or the Amazing Aeronaut.'

To return to the New English and the impossibility of judging the solitary picture, two exceptions to this limitation must be made. They are the work of genius, and work where the interest is in the design alone. It is only necessary to speak of the latter. The picture which seeks to arouse delight because in it the shapes and planes and volumes make one another alive by their perfect and unique interdependence, must either succeed or fail. An engine is either working or not working. No imitation can succeed because the slightest change kills the whole life of the design. Such a picture is more or less exciting as the shapes from which the design is compacted are more numerous and more complicated. The pictures of Mr. James Fitton (No. 201) and Miss Margaret Fitton (No. 289) are too simple to be very exciting, but they are unquestionably good and pleasant pictures with charm of colour and nice texture. It is tempting to include in this category the remarkable 34-foot-long ink drawing by Mrs. Madge E. Gill, now in the Whitechapel Art Gallery. It is on calico, and in many ways resembles the woodcuts of Viennese children which were about some time ago. The whole surface is

drawn over in great detail, but without any emphasis or focus. It is in fact pattern, not design.

For the rest, exhibitions such as those at Suffolk Street and the Whitechapel Road generally drive the critic into writing only of those exhibitors whose reputations are made already. This depressing task need not, however, be undertaken, as there are few such painters in the latter, and the pictures of those in the New English are, with the exception of the work of Miss Ethel Walker, which is always a particular pleasure, among the dullest and often the worst in the show.

It is a relief to leave the meretricious pictures of Miss Klinghoffer for the sound draughtsmanship and clear vision of Mr. Skeaping. Mr. Skeaping is holding a show of drawings and sculpture at the Tooth Gallery. His sculpture was not on show as it was delayed in the Customs, because, being executed abroad, it was liable to duty. The fact that the sculptor is English, and that the declared value may never be realized, is ignored by the present law. The drawings are more elaborate in composition and in colour than hitherto in Mr. Skeaping's work. And in both he is successful, particularly in the exquisite freshness of his pinks and blues. But his interest is not in design. He is interested in things, in horses, bulls and active men and in the romantic landscape of Spain and Provence. He is also very interested in technique. He experiments in a variety of mixed mediums, pen, pastel and water-colour, and draws with a brush with an Oriental mastery that gives his work breadth and freedom.

Mr. Skeaping might surely receive the commission when there is next question of a public equestrian statue. His wooden horse exhibited last year, and now at Dorland House, was a fine achievement. If he were given a monument to execute he would produce not only a fine piece of sculpture that would be

## Reviews

an ornament to our streets, but also a real memorial and probably an excellent portrait of the man commemorated. Public statuary is not within the scope of every artist, it is not suitable perhaps to the greatest sculptors – it needs a certain flamboyance and worldliness to make it a pleasant but not too arresting a sight in our daily life – but it is certainly suitable to Mr. Skeaping. It is not often that we have such an opportunity. Need it be missed?

Mr. Skeaping would do such a work well, partly because he lacks one of the characteristics that make modern art most interesting. Unit One has been attacked because it aims at catching the transitory essence of to-day. That is surely a foolish criticism. The painter or sculptor seeks to convey to others, that is, to state intelligibly things which cannot be communicated in words. His language is of its nature universal. It is a different matter with the things that he has to state. We are each of us examples illustrating and enlarging the concept of human nature. The visual art of a generation is an indication, possibly the most penetrating indication that there can be, of the way in which that generation has specified the general idea of human nature. Mr. Skeaping's work is an indication of how ordinary we are, how little we differ from all the other men who have lived. There are characteristics of handling which date it irrevocably; but otherwise it restates what many artists of many times have stated. Mr. Anthony Gross, the last artist whose work is noticed this month, is interested instead in the ways in which we do differ from all other men. And he is instantly involved in the problem of evolving an adequate form, some sort of style with which to state our disjointedness. Perhaps it is the influence, and the understanding of modern French art, a combination which is unfortunately rare among the English artists who are wrestling with this problem;

perhaps it is that he works in the slighter mediums of etching and water-colour; perhaps indeed it is that he has not penetrated the depth of the problem; in any case Mr. Gross has found some sort of a solution. He has technique, and style, and subject-matter, and their coherence make his work remarkable. His water-colours which were exhibited last month at the Leicester Galleries, are executed in gouache and indian ink. They are lively in colour, feeling and design. But it is the etchings which are of particular interest. No medium has been so misused. There are a multitude of English etchers; but there are few whose work is as exciting as Mr. Gross' work. No one would disparage the magnificent topography of Mr. Rushbury and Mr. Bone; but their line is sober and confined, it has not got the electric life which Rembrandt and Hercules Seghers, and Mr. Gross can give it. Mr. Gross exploits the full range of his medium. His deliberate structural lines are variegated with sudden deep biting, and rich patches of dots, curls and parallel strokes. His style lends itself particularly to landscapes. An etching like 'La Route de Ste Livrade' shows a lovely sense of pleasure in leaves and trees and the different texture of fields. Mr. Gross has also a touch of the satirist. No doubt it is from the French, among whom he has lived a good deal, that he has acquired the edge, the psychological perceptiveness disembarassed of sentimentality which is so peculiarly French. His street scenes 'Sortie d'Usine No. 1' with its busy background and 'Issy les Molineaux' with its fascinating horse and carriage and lean curly-haired dogs, are not so pleasant as the landscapes. They are more experimental both in technique and style, indulging in a multitude of lines which, despite their appearance, are far from meaningless. Mr. Gross has also made an 'animated cartoon' for the films which was shown at the Film Society on October

## Reviews

28th. It is to be hoped this will be shown more generally, and to a larger public.

### *MUSIC IN LONDON*

THERE are certain features of London musical life, which in the provinces would be called provincial, except that in the provinces these features are not apparent. Such is the almost insensate enthusiasm for a particular composer or performer which manifests itself at certain periods with the most depressing regularity. There is an element in any enthusiasm which commands something akin to respect, and a disturbance in the looking-glass calm of musical London should be an occasion for rejoicing; if one felt the enthusiasm to be involuntary, or the disturbance to be profound, one would welcome both, if not as a sign of animation, at least as a response to stimuli. On the contrary, however, one must be vaguely distrustful of these Quixotic affections. For one thing, their flame is usually kept at super-heat by a coterie of Press, impresarios, intelligenzia and other agencies; for another, their unfortunate objects often suffer an eclipse as complete as their day was effulgent: worshippers and worshipped alike appear to be the victims of a conspiracy. This appearance is, of course, only a matter of vague feeling; it is only possible to sense these strange convulsions in society, and to see them reflected, to a certain extent, in current concert programmes. Sour though such observations may be, a point is reached when a libation of cold water is the only offering one can make to whatever new gods the new season may bring forth.

Music only reaches London through a filter of what we may out of courtesy call good taste; we are the real musical Papists, and must have authority before we can have convictions. The inner voice may speak, but we must not admit its

pleadings until some sanction has been bestowed. A subtle echo is caught up, that Sibelius is the greatest living composer, and we become paralytic with Nordic grandeur, ignoring every other trend of contemporary thought in the blissful knowledge that we can enjoy music full of common chords and yet be modern. Another echo, not so subtle, is heard, that Berlioz was the greatest master of the nineteenth century, and immediately 'The Ring' becomes anathema. In the same measure do executants suffer these same vicissitudes; a whole procession springs to one's mind; names such as Cortot, Orloff, Busch – and now the cry is Schnabel, and lo! the ranks divide . . . all these artistes play just as magnificently as ever, possibly more so, yet the prudish London public has no place in its bosom for more than one love at a time.

When one of these great men has penetrated this barrage of good taste, and we realize that we can warm to him as we secretly long to warm to many another, then a flood of pent-up enthusiasm that would normally be generally diffused sweeps out in a heavy concentrated stream. We know that for the time we cannot go wrong, and we make the most of our opportunity. Still wrapped in our treasured robes of connoisseurship, we have authority to give free play to our affections, and so London musical life achieves that strange lack of balance which is so oddly at war with our apparent national temper.

The result of this barrier is two-fold; although nothing that is fantastically bad will take root, nothing that is vital and endemic, on the other hand, is likely to burgeon. Our authority is not a final or absolute one; it usually appeals in its turn to one higher still on the Continent, and the reflection from first one and then another facet of the general musical life of Europe will successively illuminate Lon-

## Reviews

don, perpetually blinding its sight and obscuring a comprehensive *coup d'œil* of the whole scheme. If only one or two foreign composers of the very first rank could be induced to work in London, I am convinced that their stabilizing influence would make our city, which after all has many advantages, a musical centre of the first importance. But alas! such is our blindness that we make it increasingly difficult for foreign musicians even to visit us for the week-end, and at the idea that they should earn a living on our shores, we bristle with indignation.

Anyone who looks through the concert programmes for the present season will notice with pleasure the names of one or two ancient gods: Stravinsky, whose worshippers by now seem of almost Biblical antiquity, is re-appearing, and on November 28th the B.B.C. Symphony

Orchestra will give the first English performance of *Perséphone*. This lovely work was first performed in Paris last August, under the composer's direction; it is described as a *mélodrama en 3 parties*, with words by André Gide, some of which are to be sung, and some to be spoken. The beginning of the second part, in the clarity and subtlety of the writing, and the sensitive and resourceful phrasing, is as beautiful as anything Stravinsky has written. It contains a short pastiche of Bach, which will cause grave misgivings to many critics, although one feels it could only have been written by Stravinsky. The whole has a truly classic poise. It is profoundly to be hoped that the London public will extend the orthodoxy of the moment, whatever it may be, to embrace this new manifestation of an age-old deity.

ANONYMITY: A CORRESPONDENCE

44 Bedford Square,

W.C.1.

October 25th, 1934.

MY DEAR ELLIS,

Why anonymous book reviews? Anonymity is the tradition and the glory of our press. If we are writing for *The Times* or the *Morning Post* we, almost unconsciously, suppress certain personal idiosyncrasies following the rhythm of the paper, merging (very properly) into a corporate whole. The 'policy' of a great newspaper is a vital part of its individuality. This does not enable 'Our Golf Correspondent' to hide the identity of Mr. Bernard Darwin nor does 'Our Own Correspondent' conceal – to those who are interested – the name of the correspondent. Anonymity is a right and proper attitude – making for objectivity. But for literature – except from the Nazi and Communist point of view – there is no 'policy'. Your novel and play reviews in the last number of *LIFE AND LETTERS* are cases in point. Why should I be obliged to ring you up – wasting your time and mine – in order to know who wrote them? No editor is churlish enough to refuse the information. If I read a review signed 'Edwin Muir' my interest both in the review and in the books reviewed is heightened. There is also the personal relationship established between reader and reviewer. Have you any right to deprive *writers* of that benefit? (the writers of books). On what academic altar is this contact sacrificed?

Yours ever,

ELIZABETH BIBESCO.

10 ORANGE STREET,  
W.C.2.

*All Saints' Day*, 1934.

MY DEAR ELIZABETH,

Why not a literary policy? If anonymity be the handmaid of Nazism or of Communism, is it not more dangerous in the political than in the literary part of a paper? The policy is purely practical and,

I admit, experimental. I do not see how anyone, looking at the columns of most of the papers which deal with books, can deny that criticism is in a far worse condition than it was in the days of the old *Spectator*, the old *Saturday Review*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Academy* and the *Speaker*. need I remind you that one of the greatest editors of our time established the fame of another paper, *The New Statesman*, on this same principle of general anonymity? What I, possibly not free from professional bias, most deplore is that, with the arrival of a stubble of signatures, has come about the disappearance of the editor; and with the editor replaced and misplaced by the mere autograph collector, we are threatened with the disappearance of the newspaper or the magazine as an entity. That contact between critic and author which you desiderate can be dangerous as well as delightful. It can exist, with as much profit and no less pleasure, if its terms are not bruited to an unconcerned public. You, after all, are an author yourself, and are not liable to the vulgar appeal which is satisfied when the unlearned see a review of Mr. Blue-chin's recollections signed (and perhaps written) by Miss Scarletnails. Your curiosity is professional – and I think it is a good thing to arouse it – is there a better way of arousing it than by anonymity? Is there a way except the anonymous which will make the ordinary lover of literature say '*LIFE AND LETTERS* says'?

Yours ever,

R. ELLIS ROBERTS.

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# Life and Letters

December 1934

## Affairs of Men

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### *IN EUROPE NOW*

ONLY those who were in Paris on February 6th and the following week can understand the French political situation during the last nine months. They were incredible days. Quiet, sensible men in private conversation would suddenly shout 'Je descendrai dans la rue.' The telephone buzzed with the voices of excited guests demanding the names of possible fellow guests. Entertaining became an intricate game of readjustments. Friendships melted and sprang into being with lightning rapidity. The cad of your own opinion became a blood brother – 'blood' was the word. Old admirations and old hates dissolved in the fierce heat of unleashed passions. Your adversaries were 'des émeutiers,' you were a 'manifestant.' There was nothing more to be said. Indeed there was nothing to be said. 'Action' was the universal cry. It was, therefore, with genuine relief that those who had preserved some relative sanity welcomed the advent of M. Doumergue. M. Doumergue was not a man of any intellectual eminence, he had none of Poincaré's astonishing ability. But the

very fact that he was like a majority of his compatriots endeared him to them. Latin countries are envious and critical. As soon as a man stands out he must be pulled down a peg – or preferably several pegs. Eminence of any sort turns you into a target. Better to destroy than to be compelled to admire. Both Clemenceau and Briand were defeated for the Presidency.

The French in their legitimate suspicion of supermen are less than just towards their great public servants.

This is not to imply that M. Doumergue had not many valuable – indeed at that moment invaluable – qualities. He was shrewd, good-humoured, direct, courageous and honest. He had a great capacity for inspiring public affection. Was he not always called 'Papa Doumergue'? His simplicity, his smile, his lack of *chis chis*, and above all his lack of a future, made him the only really popular figure in France. In those hectic days, common sense, good humour and a paternal manner were exactly what was required.

How then, nine months later, did he disappear, leaving hardly a ripple on the water?

## Affairs of Men

The English Press – with the exception of an excellent article in the *New Statesman and Nation* – has been singularly blind to the causes and the significance of M. Doumergue's downfall.

Many of the suggested reforms of the Constitution were sensible and overdue (the denial of the right to strike to Government employees, who include in France railwaymen and other manual workers, was provocative and silly).

The Radical Socialists went the limit in concessions. M. Herriot, who had shown courageous patience in the Tardieu–Chautemps affair, was conciliatory to the last. No one wanted the break-up of the Ministry, and it could have been saved with a little tact and good will. Unfortunately the atmosphere of the *réunions des ministres* became increasingly charged. Personal feelings began to run high. Things were said which it was easier to regret than to forget. M. Doumergue may not be an ambitious man, but he had come to like and believe in his own power. Considering himself invincible, he had reached the 'all or nothing,' 'take it or leave it' stage – always a negation of statesmanship. Then he hurled his bomb in the shape of his famous Saturday-night broadcast, of which his Ministers had been kept in complete ignorance. This was virtually an appeal to the people over and above Parliament and the Government. He was using the mob as a lever, inflaming the rioters to make a black-mailing point against his colleagues.

On Sunday M. Flandin delivered his speech, associating himself with his Radical Socialist colleagues. This, for

everyone except the Paris correspondents of the London papers, was the writing on the wall.

Many Frenchmen of many different schools of thought breathed: 'The Republic is saved.' The superman bogey had been laid once again.

The French are far more jealous of their parliamentary system than the English realize. M. Doumergue's high-handed methods had made many thoughtful people remember the Brüning *décrets-lois* which, by destroying the power of the Reichstag, paved the way for Hitler.

M. Doumergue's farewell message (he seems to have been as much surprised as he was disgruntled) is a melancholy winding-up of an honourable career. To refer to 'unarmed men being shot down in the Place de la Concorde' was not only disingenuous, but an appeal to precisely those passions he had been called to power in order to allay.

The new Ministry is a typically Gallic paradox. M. Flandin, who was intimately associated with the Aéropostale scandal ('Herriot-postale' the *Canard enchaîné* calls the new Government), was the bugbear of the Left. Now he is their saviour. No one denies the ability of M. Flandin. He is, as French politicians go, an exceedingly young man. His ministry includes men more to the Right than any who served under M. Doumergue.

M. Regnier, late *rapporteur du Budget*, is now presumably defending a financial policy that he has hitherto violently attacked.

M. Mandel has lost his virginity as a stirrer up of trouble by becoming a minister. The *éminence grise* of M. Clemenceau's régime, he knows enough

## Affairs of Men

to hang most men, and uses his knowledge to keep them dangling in the air.

Why exchange this delightful past-time for office? No one was more brilliantly effective in the Stavisky enquiry. His examination of the witnesses was devastating. M. Mandel's colleagues will no doubt suffer from his wit, but they will suffer in private and not in public. It will be cheap at the price.

\* \* \*

The reception of the Flandin Ministry has been most interesting. The riots, the public fury, the universal indignation, the national mourning that were expected to follow the retirement of M. Doumergue, have completely failed to materialize. A small crowd shouted 'À bas Herriot.' Colonel de la Rocque and the Croix de feu sent messages of loyalty to the late President, and then nothing happened except a series of unprecedented majorities for the new Government.

The Chambre released from prison is on its best behaviour.

Created in strange circumstances and put together with even stranger materials, a real *ministère d'apaisement* now exists in France.

\* \* \*

The position of Germany in relation to the disarmament problem was brought into the open in the Commons debate on Wednesday. As usual, the atmosphere of unreality which befalls discussions on that subject was dispelled by Mr. Baldwin, who can rise above an occasion and give to it an essential dignity. The question is complicated. Germany is, and has

been, re-arming with frenzied concentration. The Versailles Treaty is a scrap of tissue paper. Are we to make the best of a bad job (largely, thanks to Sir John Simon, our own bad job), or are we to stick to some principle of honour and good faith?

The two pro-Nazi arguments are:

- (1) We saved you from Communism;
- (2) You drove us to our present state.

The answer to the first is, firstly, that the Germany of Brüning was certainly not a Communistic Germany, and it had the whole world on its side — no mean asset. Secondly, some observers assert that in Russia today there is a far greater degree of free speech than in Germany, and, with due regard to its ridiculous sides, intellectual life is vital and vivid, fostered and pampered by the Government. No doubt, as in other countries, the proletariat suffers (in all but name!) and the arriviste profits.

The second point is more important. No one defends the behaviour of the Allies since the Armistice. There have been faults, blunders, even crimes. These are matters for our consciences; but they do not excuse complete blindness to the present situation. It is, after all, the present situation with which we are confronted. A woman may say 'It is I who drove that man mad,' but it does not oblige her in atonement to give a revolver to a homicidal lunatic.

This appears to be our policy. 'The man has a revolver. Wouldn't it be more intelligent to say "I gave it you" instead of admitting the obvious fact that he took it?' Is it more intelligent? Surely not. The admission of the *fait accompli* is the beginning of the end of everything that makes inter-

## Affairs of Men

national agreements possible or useful.

Talk to any sane German – Germans living in Germany, not *émigrés* – he will say the same thing. 'For God's sake, for the sake of the millions of decent Germans who are biding their time, make *no* concessions. You will be bolstering up Hell and retarding our deliverance and the emergence of a Germany worthy to take her place in the comity of nations. A Germany of which we can be proud and which you can respect.'

Pending that day, what is our policy to be?

All problems must be dealt with at Geneva. There must be no private encouragements, no separate agreements, no secret bargaining.

This does not mean publicity in the journalistic sense of the word, but a common front and joint decisions.

Why did Germany leave the League of Nations? Because for the first time America, England, France and Italy were united in a common plan which reduced their respective armaments to a lower level than any that had been hoped for before or has been envisaged since. Germany was re-arming, and was determined to continue to do so. She fled before unanimity.

Sir John Simon, whose prickly, finicky, legalistic and irritating speech had provided his adversary with a pretext, was the first to run; like a breathless bridesmaid after the fleeing bride

Herr Hitler, the Wilhelmstrasse, and all responsible Germans, were in a state of acute nervous apprehension.

Reassured by the sight of the British Foreign Minister pursuant, they

regained their courage and doubled their bluff.

Sir John Simon had repeated his Manchukuo achievement. In life we do not go from one thing to another thing, but from one thing to the same thing!

Less intelligent than the French *émigrés*, though we learn nothing, we forget everything. The Germans learnt one lesson from the war: that they could not have the whole world united against them

What a pity that we should not have learnt the same lesson!

The committee of three on the Saar plebiscite, presided over by Baron Aloisi, reached perfect agreement. Result: immediate soft-pedalling by Germany. Whatever may happen after January 13th, nothing will happen before that date. Simple deduction: only a common front can save civilization.

No one but the child of a crank – or possibly its father – could believe in an effective control of German armaments

\* \* \*

Information from Germany (from a Right Wing source) The aristocracy (who throughout have shown considerable spirit), the intellectuals and a majority (?) of the workers are anti-Nazi. The *bourgeoisie*, and above all the *petite bourgeoisie*, are unanimously behind Hitler. So are a vast majority – in all classes – of women. Corruption is rampant (the possibilities of blackmail must be unlimited). The general demoralization appalling. 'We no longer *know* the difference between right and wrong.'

There is one encouraging factor.

## Affairs of Men

Youth is beginning to rebel against the tosh which it is being taught.

A professor giving his obligatory racial lesson was shouted down by his class.

The Professor: 'I will call in the S.A.'

The Class: 'We are the S A.'

\* \* \*

If by the Grace of God, or the puckishness of Wotan, Herr Hitler were to disappear, the *régime* would disintegrate among the dissensions and rivalries of his followers. The Reichswehr would then take charge of the situation under the leadership of either General Fritsch or General von Hammerstein. Both are able men, and both, having fought in the war, are pacifists. The dictatorship would be a moderate (and no doubt transient) *régime* working in with the Left. But any military dictator would have the advantage over Herr Hitler and his satellites that a professional warder has over an amateur sadist.

Every German *émigré* will tell you that prison there is paradise compared with a concentration camp.

\* \* \*

M. Archimbaud's speech did not so much let the cat out of the bag as make one wonder how far the cat had gone. Its purr has been none too silent, and the surprise lay not in the facts but in their revelation. M. Poincaré himself, with far less reasons than exist to-day, flirted with Soviet Russia. He, too, went from one thing to the same thing. A lover frequently resembles a husband – *en moins bien*.

A Russian alliance has apparently

become 'du classique,' and the French like continuity.

The position of the Right is amusing – but there are always moments when anti-Christ is put at the disposal of religion.

\* \* \*

The Naval talks between the United States, Great Britain and Japan are of such vital importance that one can only bless the comparative lack of publicity which they have enjoyed. They have benefited considerably from Princess Marina's marriage. Our merchant princes and our War Office are intensely pro-Japanese. (Japanese armaments since 1914 have increased 300 per cent.) Is it conceivable that even an elementary sense of reality can fail to appreciate the vital importance of the closest possible co-operation with America? To alienate the United States would be a criminal folly which one can hardly bear to envisage.

At the present moment we are apparently shilly-shallying in what has become our usual ineffective and provocative way.

Is it possible that Sir John Simon's final achievement will be the creation of an Americano-Japanese Alliance at the expense of Great Britain?

Even our Foreign Secretary is probably incapable of this *tour de force*.

\* \* \*

*Mot de la fin:* (Emmanuel Arène in the Chambre des députés) '*À force de nous appuyer sur nos principes ils finiront par céder.*'

### AT HOME

THE marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Kent evoked a mass emotion in the

## Affairs of Men

nation unmatched in intensity for many years. These ebullitions of popular sentiment are quite unpredictable. The newspapers certainly made the most of the occasion, and those of them that habitually overdo things, overdid them to the top of their bent; but it would be unjust to suggest that the enthusiasm was manufactured. It was genuinely spontaneous, and the fact is interesting. The English Royal Family are justly popular, but, allowing fully for that, some people seem to have found the extent of the excitement surprising. Was it that the general feeling of depression and insecurity at the present time is so marked that public opinion seized on an opportunity to slacken the tension and release pent-up emotions? Or was the French commentator right who read into this national demonstration of loyalty the unconscious expression of a need? Or are such interpreters being altogether too subtle, and was the whole remarkable manifestation no more and no less than one of popular pleasure in a charming personality and a lovely face?

\* \* \*

Besides India, room has to be found by Parliament this session for several important social measures. One of the first things to be settled is the functioning of the organizations under the new Unemployment Act – the administration of the ‘dole’ and public assistance. Expert opinion is strongly divided on the merits of the Act and whether the unemployment insurance system will stand the strain of competition with public assistance. Next on the list comes the Government’s

plans to aid the derelict areas.

Following the reports of its investigators, the Government has appointed two Commissioners, one for England and Wales and one for Scotland, who are to have powers to initiate schemes of land settlement, afforestation and the like, and are to be given £2,000,000 of public money to spend between now and the end of the financial year. There will be a general wish that they shall interpret as liberally as possible the instruction not to be afraid to experiment. Two millions of money, with the likelihood of more to follow, will do something by way of amelioration, and should have some value in showing these districts, whose populations have got almost beyond hope, that the country has not quite forgotten them. But the derelict areas are a far bigger problem than is recognized by these piecemeal proposals, and will require a much more comprehensively planned effort if their social miseries and economic wastage are to be arrested.

Also down for dispatch to the Statute Book in the present session is the important Overcrowding Bill, which is the next instalment of the Government’s plans for slum clearance. It is satisfactory that in the midst of so much pressing business, time is apparently to be found to pass a Bill to stop ‘ribbon development.’ It is only to be a permissive measure, and the task will still remain of persuading local authorities to take advantage of it, but legislation to stop this scandal is long overdue, and a big effort ought to be made to prevent the pressure of other business crowding it out. It will be an unusually congested and a politically

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fateful session: by the time it is over a General Election will be near at hand.

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If the Conservative Party had split over India, all sorts of interesting things might have happened. The whole political outlook in Britain would have changed. But the Conservative Party was quite unlikely to oblige its enemies by doing any such thing. The Conservatives don't split, they leave that to other parties; and there was never a serious prospect of their committing suicide when by holding together they can retain a reasonably good prospect of remaining for several years to come the largest political party. The additional safeguards attached to the Constitution by the Select Committee's Report took much of the sting out of the Die-hard attack, and after the decisive vote for Mr. Baldwin at the Queen's Hall meeting we have probably heard the last of root and branch opposition. Labour will oppose the Report, though it may not go to the length of voting against it on the third reading. As for the reactions of India, all but extremist opinion, after an initial groan of vexation, seems to be coming round in favour of treating the Report constructively, as offering the only chance of Constitutional advance for several years to come.

\* \* \*

Ships, trains, motor-cars and flying machines have all been in the news during the month. One more nail has been driven into the coffin of free trade and *laissez-faire* for this mercantile nation by the grant of a State subsidy

for tramp shipping and loans for replacement of obsolete vessels.

On the permanent way the British railways' reply to Continental and American experiments with Diesel-electric locomotives has been to set up a new speed record with an eleven-year-old steam engine, which beat comparable performances by the German oil-burner handsomely. The event has its significance for the home coal industry. Motor-cars have held their own as news-items by continued high figures of road accidents; by further experiment with the 'Belisha Passovers' (as irreverent Members of Parliament call them); by the Ministry of Transport's announcement that it means to plan all future roads, and convert many existing ones, to take a raised curbway running down the centre, segregating outgoing from incoming traffic; and by the curious appointment of Sir Edwin Lutyens to advise on the planning of London's roads. In the air, progress is maintained by an attempted long-distance flight in an auto-giro (from England to the Cape), by plans for building a new airship twice the size of the *Graf Zeppelin* to maintain a regular trans-Atlantic service, and by the invention of a new device – on the analogy of big fleas having little fleas – for enabling a large seaplane to take a smaller one into the air on its back and launch it from its wing-tops. What next?

\* \* \*

The need for reform of our penal code and for a broader social outlook has been harrowingly emphasized by two recent tragedies. One was the suicide of a Dartmoor convict, who

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for an attempted escape had been sentenced to an additional three years' imprisonment and flogging with the cat. The note he left scribbled on his slate was a pitiful social indictment. 'I start up, feeling the lash.' Within two days of the newspapers reporting this affair, we overheard a well-fed gentleman in a restaurant loudly singing the praises of flogging. The other tragedy was that of a mother who having tended lovingly her imbecile son for years, 'put him to sleep' when herself under sentence of an operation from which she feared she might not recover. Facing the judge's death sentence, 'I did it in mercy,' she said. As the law stands, the judge had no alternative to pronouncing sentence of death, though the jury's recommendation and his own words of sympathy made a reprieve certain. What a cruel farce!

\* \* \*

The attempt to bring some order into the chaos of our Gaming Laws

has resulted in one truly Gilbertian (or does one nowadays say 'Herbertian'?) situation. Everyone supposed that whatever else the new Act did, it would finally blot the copybook of the Irish Sweepstake. Astonished legislators have now discovered that it does nothing of the kind. One is still legally entitled to buy a Sweep ticket. But it was the 'intention' of Parliament, says the Home Secretary (who told him so?), to prevent tickets being sold. He therefore proposes to ask the Post Office to interrupt the passage of letters containing money or tickets. In other words, you can only be certain of doing successfully what is admittedly your legal right by going across to the Irish Free State and doing it there. This is good business for the train and boat services, but rather hard, surely, on the innocent citizen of the United Kingdom. Well, well. It all comes of trying to tinker piecemeal with a problem that can only be solved, in a legal sense, comprehensively – if at all.



# Tunnel's End

by G. Rostrevor Hamilton

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REMEMBERING, in this dark,  
A meek-eyed Spring,  
Renounced, remembered in vain,  
Remembering.

They peer ahead, cry hark!  
And hope again  
Is slain by the echo dying  
Behind them, their own crying.

And after the next bend  
Is the next bend  
And the axes' thud,  
And the flares, till flares grow dark  
And quiet descend  
Dark on stilled blood.

But ah! if the tunnel end,  
What width, what height,  
What swirling backward of night,  
Blue-winged, miraculous light,  
What light!

And then, so long confined  
In caverns blind,  
As unseeing Earth drinks in,  
Shall they drink in  
Brilliance, through starved skin  
And through lids blind, blinded at last by light!

# The Pantomime

## by G. K. Chesterton

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MR. MAURICE BARING, the chief Puppet-Master of the Puppet-Show of Memory, has included in a recent reprint, I am glad to see, an item that I have loved long since and lost awhile, in the form of a scene from the old Drury Lane sort of Harlequinade, recast in the manner of the mystical plays of Maeterlinck. It was probably written when Maeterlinck was very much the fashion, and when people had long been saying that the Harlequinade was hopelessly old-fashioned. In one sense, it would be difficult to say which of the two is more old-fashioned now. But, to judge by current criticism and conversation, there are many who remember Pantaloon and Harlequin who hardly even remember Pelleas and Melisande. It is a queer thing to note the extent to which the world has become silent about Maeterlinck; though it may be the more impressive to the remaining followers of so eloquent an admirer of silence. Whatever be the cause, it certainly was not that his work was devoid of a very individual imaginative quality. Personally, I should guess that he had shared the fate of many modern attempts to refound mysticism on something less real, rather than something more real than this world. But the matter only arises here in

relation to this little literary jest about the Pantomime, which I always felt to be one of Mr. Baring's most charming fancies. Of course, it is a very good burlesque of Maeterlinck; it is also, in a sense, a very good burlesque of the Pantomime; and the latter is the more delicate achievement. Every healthy person wishes to make fun of a serious thing; but it is generally almost impossible to make fun of a funny thing. But in this case the notion of fun or burlesque must not be confused, in either case, with any idea of hostility, or even of satire. Parody does not consist merely of contrast; at its best it rather consists of a superficial contrast covering a substantial congruity. The bitter sort of burlesque may exist, and have a right to exist; but it is doubtful whether in this particular form the bitterest is the best. The one sort of parodist will naturally parody the sort of style he dislikes. But the other sort of parodist will always prefer to parody the style he likes. I remember in my boyhood, when Swinburne was our (rather too bubbly) champagne, I for one wrote almost as many conscious travesties of Swinburne as unconscious copies of him.

Now in this case of the Pantomime the paradox has a sort of moral. For I know that the real reason why I return

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with unwearied joy to Mr. Baring's little Maeterlinckian Harlequinade is because the atmosphere of the Harlequinade really was for me, if not exactly Maeterlinckian, at least in some mysterious way mystical. I need not dwell on the points in the parody which were witty, considered as contrasts as well as coincidences. The policeman repeats at intervals, like the tolling of a funeral bell (a lost and wandering bell attached to no church and uttering in its hollow throat an awful agnosticism), 'It was not on my beat.' The Pantaloon, one of the shivering old men of Maeterlinck, babbles not of green fields but of grey and ghostly sausages, as of things he will never find, or is not certain that he ever did find. But my point here is that, in spite of the comic contrast between the hilarity of the Pantomime and the holelessness of the Maeterlinckian atmosphere, there really is something that, for me at least, melts the two into a sort of mystical unity; so that the top-heavy house of the Harlequinade is even here like my home. For I am quite certain, as a fact of psychology, that I did even in childhood regard the knockabout part of the Pantomime, with its pokers and sausages, as being none the less a poetical part of the Pantomime; and as unmistakably within the frontiers of fairyland as the palace of the Fairy Queen. Never on earthly anvil—never in earthly fireplace, did that red poker gleam; never those clattering milkcans brim with an earthly cream. The policeman was perfectly right about both scenes and in both senses. He was not on his beat. He was a stray and estranged policeman: a policeman stolen by the fairies: a constable

wandering far away from his constabulary duties, if he ever had any. The joke depended on the very Victorian accident that the costume of a London policeman seemed both commonplace and comic; and yet, although he was comic, he was not really commonplace. He was not merely befooled but bewitched; and his blue uniform revisited the glimpses of a blue moon. Still, it is curious to reflect how completely different the whole drama would have seemed, if he had been any sort of foreign *gendarme*, with a cocked hat and a sword.

Now my interest in the matter is this: that I know many will say that this sense of glamour is an effect of distance, like the colour of blue hills or crimson clouds; and that in this romantic aspect it is *only* a puppet-show of memory. They would say that I saw it in this mystical manner through the intervening veils of time, through the mists of Maeterlinck, through the mockeries of Mr. Baring, and, above all, through that depth of delicate melancholy with which the remote past is remembered. But I am certain that this is not so. Apart from the fact that the memory of childish joys does not make me melancholy (it is perhaps a fine shade of theology), and apart from the fact that I suspect that Mr. Baring himself remembers the thing very much as I do, I am quite sure that I am remembering a reality that was real then as well as now. You could as soon persuade me that the taste of toffee was an illusion that only came to me in later years, or that I think I liked roast chestnuts then only because I like them now, as convince me that I did not have, even as a child,

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an overwhelming impression that this farcical world was fantastic, not merely in the sense of being comic, but also in the sense of being mystic. Though the scene might superficially seem completely constructed out of objects made as much as possible prosaic, I had an instant inward certainty that they were all poetic. The sky above those staggering chimneys was not the sky above the chimneys in the street outside; its stars would have been strange stars; for I had looked round another corner of the cosmos. To wander in the streets of that strange town would have been as unearthly an experience as to wander in the Blue Forest round Bluebeard's Sapphire Palace, or along the Golden Orange-Groves in the gardens of Prester John. Not verbally, but quite vividly, I knew then, exactly as I know now, that there is something mysterious and perhaps more than mortal about the power and call of Imagination. I do not think this early experience has been quite rightly understood, even by those modern writers who have written the most charming and fanciful studies of childhood; and I am not so presumptuous as to think that I can scientifically succeed where I think they have somehow vaguely failed. But I have often fancied that it might be worth while to set down a few notes or queries about this difficult and distant impression. For one thing, the ordinary phrases used about childish fancies often strike me as missing the mark; and being, in some subtle way, quite misleading. For instance, there is the very popular phrase, 'Make-believe.' This seems to imply that the mind makes itself

believe something; or else that it first makes something and then forces itself to believe in it, or to believe something about it. I do not think there is even this slight crack of falsity in the crystal clearness and directness of the child's vision of a fairy palace—or a fairy policeman. In one sense the child believes much less, and in another much more than that. I do not think the child is deceived; or that he attempts for a moment to deceive himself. I think he instantly asserts his direct and divine right to enjoy beauty; that he steps straight into his own lawful kingdom of imagination, without any quibbles or questions, such as arise afterwards out of false moralities and philosophies, touching the nature of falsehood and truth. In other words, I believe that the child has inside his head a pretty correct and complete definition of the whole nature and function of Art; with the one addition that he is quite incapable of saying, even to himself, a single word on the subject. Would that many other professors of æsthetics were under a similar restraint. Anyhow, he does not say to himself, 'This is a real street, in which mother could go shopping.' He does not say to himself, 'This is an exact realistic copy of a real street, to be admired for its technical correctness.' Neither does he say, 'This is an unreal street, and I am drugging and deceiving my powerful mind with something that is a mere illusion.' Neither does he say, 'This is only a story, and nurse says it is very naughty to tell stories.' If he says anything, he only says what was said by those men who saw the white blaze of the Transfiguration: 'It is well for us to be here.'

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This is the beginning of all sane art criticism: wonder combined with the complete serenity of the conscience in the acceptance of such wonders. The purity of the child largely consists in its entire absence of morality, in the sense of Puritan morality, and all the modern and muddled moralities that have sprung from it, scientific and provincial and equivocal; especially the confusions about different meanings of words like 'fact' and 'fable' and 'falsehood.' The problem is very close to the real problem about images. A child knows that a doll is not a baby; just as clearly as a real believer knows that a statue of an angel is not an angel. But both know that in both cases the image has the power of both opening and concentrating the imagination. Stevenson, whom I shall always count a fountain of fine inspiration, and certainly a man gifted with the eye that sees the daydreams of childhood in broad daylight, was nevertheless not quite sound on this example, possibly because he was not quite sound on the other. He talks too often of the child having his head in a cloud of confusion and indifference to fact or fancy. I believe that our difficulty with the child has the directly opposite cause. It comes because the child is perfectly clear about the difference, not only between truth and falsehood, but between fiction and falsehood. He understands the two essential types of truth: the truth of the mystic, which turns a fact into a truth, where it should be turned into a truth, because the alternative is a triviality; and the truth of the martyr, which treats a truth as a fact, where it should be treated as a fact,

because the alternative is a lie. In other words, the child knows perfectly well, without being told, the difference between saying he has seen the policeman cut in two in the pantomime, and saying he has seen his little brother break the jug in the nursery, when he really broke it himself. It is we who have grown confused about these categories; and cannot realize the swiftness and clarity with which the child accepts what we call the convention of art. Looking at the street, down which the clown pursues the policeman with a poker, he would never dream of saying in the ordinary sense, indeed he would never dream of saying at all, 'That is a real street.' But still less would he ever dream of saying, 'That is an unreal street.' He has a better understanding of dreams—and visions.

In the case of the Pantomime, there is one plain fact which clinches this conviction for me. I know I knew that the scenery and costume were 'artificial,' because I deeply rejoiced that they were artificial. I liked the notion that things were made of painted wood or plastered by hand with gold and silver. These were the vestments and ornaments of the ritual; but they were not the rite, still less the revelation. I liked the magic-box called a stage, because there, for some reason, the light that never was on sea or land was on paint and pasteboard. But I knew perfectly well that it was paint and pasteboard. It would be impossible for anybody not to know that, who had a toy-theatre of his own. In the Pantomime of my childhood, with its somewhat simpler scenery, there were tricks of mere stage carpen-

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try which I enjoyed as much as if I were working them myself. There was one way of representing tossing waves, by rank behind rank of scalloped blue walls as groundpieces, moved in opposite directions so that the crests seemed to cross and dance. I knew how it was done; because my father did it himself before my very eyes, in my own toy-theatre at home. But it gave me such ecstacy that even now, when I think of it for an instant, my heart leaps up like the wave. I knew it was not Water; but I knew it was Sea; and in that flash of knowledge I had passed far beyond those who suffer the fixed and freezing illusion, uttered by the pessi-

mistic poet, that 'the sea's a lot of water that happens to be there.' In imagination there is no illusion; no, not even an instant of illusion. For no split second, even then, did I believe that people had cut in two a live man—even if he was only a policeman. If I had believed it, I should have felt very different. What I felt was that it was *right*; that it was a good and enlarging and inspiriting thing to see; that it was an excellent experience to look down on the strange street where such things could be seen; in short, I could say then, with a quite undivided mind, that it was a very good Christmas present to go to the Pantomime.

### OVERHEARD

A PARK AVENUE gentleman is still brooding about an incident that happened a couple of months ago. His coloured maid had taken his Scottie, named Bunty, out for a walk, and as she was leading him along or he was leading her along—he pulls like the devil—a little girl sitting in a very smart limousine drawn up at the curb cried out, 'Oh, please let me pet him!' The maid stopped and was about to lift up the little dog when the elegant chauffeur of the limousine said, 'One moment! Does he bite?' The maid said he didn't. The chauffeur was still worried. 'Is he pedigreed?' he asked doubtfully. The maid said he was. The little girl was then allowed to pet the dog, who asked no questions at all.—NEW YORKER.

MUD thrown is ground lost.

It will be pleasant, too, when girls' fingernails get out of the red.

THERE isn't much to be seen in a little town, but what you hear makes up for it.—ABE MARTIN.

HIGH heels were invented by a woman who had been kissed on the forehead.—CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

EUROPE seems to pronounce them 'Were Debts.'—WALTER WINCHELL.

# A. R. Orage

by Denis Saurat

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ORAGE was a great man who never succeeded in expressing himself, either in life or in letters. He never succeeded because he never came to a clear understanding of himself – that is to say, he never came to a clear understanding of what he wanted.

This was shown in two ways: in his life, which he spent in looking for a Master who could make the world clear and desirable; in his writings, in which he struggled perpetually after a certain kind of prose which he never wrote. That he was a great man in himself was felt and is known by all who approached him; therefore his intimate friends alone really possessed Orage. The loss is theirs much more than the public's: his mind did fulfil itself in conversation, and he had often expressed the wish that some record of his conversations could be kept.

For it was one of the traits of his greatness that he fully realized his failure, while realizing also his potential greatness. So that I feel I am writing this of him with his full approval.

Of Orage the man much has been written already, for many loved him. To my mind, his chief trait was an unexampled generosity of heart and mind. I have never known him to be bitter in his soul – he was a man who tempted many into betraying him; and

also many more played him false on their own initiative – but he found good things to say even of those who had betrayed him. He could be just and fierce in denunciation; but in everyone he found there was some good, and he deliberately brought the good forward. One sentence of his which I think pictures him, has stuck in my mind; defending men generally against a feminist attack, he said that men also have their good points, and that for instance:

‘They do not visit the irresponsibility of women with the seriousness of hatred.’

But I think he visited nothing with the seriousness of hatred. There was no hatred in him. In intellect also he was entirely generous: he discovered pearls among the swine everywhere and rescued the pearls even from within the bowels of the swine. I used to tease him on this, and maintain that this explained his love of Eastern literature.

He tried several Masters; in fact, he never quite gave one of them up once tried: he was inclined to take his old Master with him as a fellow pupil to his new Master. His first attempt was with Nietzsche; but Orage was too like Nietzsche to be a good Nietzschean: he really felt sympathy and esteem for all the people whom his philosophy

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theoretically damned; as Nietzsche himself, he was at bottom a good Christian, in love with the gentle and delicate values rather than with the brutal virtues. So Orage just kept a Nietzschean veneer all his life, and next betook himself to theosophy and the pretended East from which he never quite came back. to Buddhism, the very opposite of Nietzsche.

Here again, the margin between men (and women) and theories grew too wide for him: he fell into the gap. He once told me, much later, about 1921, that there had been two kinds of theosophy—a higher kind, which his friend G. R. S. Mead and himself knew of, and another kind. This time, keeping Nietzsche and the Buddha with him, he went into socialism, and then guild socialism, and that ended in Major Douglas and credit reform. That he had kept Nietzsche and the Buddha with him was apparent when he told me, again about 1921: 'economics is the work of servants; you know how servants can waste the substance of a house; well now I am going down into the kitchen to give the servants a good rowing; once our house is in order we can attend to the higher things.' So this was guild socialism first and then Major Douglas.

But Nietzsche and the Buddha did not like the servants or the rowing; the higher things refused to wait. Gourdjieff came and took away Orage in 1922. Gourdjieff was Nietzsche *plus* the Buddha: his theory of immortality was that only a few men possess a germ of an immortal soul; and that even those few need the help of a Master, to educate the germ and acquire a really immortal soul: Nietzsche's supermen

trained by the Buddha. This had a queer and powerful appeal for Orage. Strangely enough, not for the usual reason: he did not automatically grant himself an immortal soul and refuse everyone else one. He was in great doubt about his own immortality; and he felt that Gourdjieff had the power of helping him. Orage put all his great capacity for propaganda at Gourdjieff's service; and years of his life and much of his strength went into that service; for Gourdjieff was a hard taskmaster. And in the end Orage failed; even as he had failed with Nietzsche, or Annie Besant.

Gourdjieff incarnated for Orage the appeal of the East, which had always been one of the leitmotifs in Orage's life. The *Mahabharata* was his ocean of song and of belief. At one time, he nearly printed the whole 200,000 lines of it in the *New Age* for free distribution to all his readers. But the money could not be found. He looked to the East for a new Renaissance of Europe, and tried to believe that the impact of Oriental thought and literature on us would produce results comparable to the results in the centuries when Greece was rediscovered in the West. A specimen of what he was looking for has been given us in his essay on *Love*, which is, I suppose, the most finished piece of writing and thinking he has left us. The critics do not seem to have noticed its publication two years ago; but I can bear witness that young men and women have come to me not knowing that I knew Orage, and have asked me about that little book, which they treasured. So perhaps Orage will live on in that essay. This essay on *Love* is announced as



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*freely adapted from the Tibetan.* But it was very freely adapted indeed: it is difficult to know from what sort of Tibetan it had been adapted. In fact, it gave expression, with a vaguely Oriental twist, to ideas which Orage had cherished and developed throughout his life. It is true, however, that the East did help him to overcome his own English limitations (as he thought) about love – though he believed also that the English have a genius for love beyond that of any other people: he specially counted the French as being very ignorant in matters of love. I always modestly agreed with him on this. Not only had the East helped him; Gourdjieff also had helped him; but perhaps also, for all he knew, that beautiful French *forêt de Fontainebleau*. Gourdjieff himself, and at a time when he had hardly ever spoken with Orage, expressed to me what was in Orage's mind, and this explains, I think, the hold of Gourdjieff over Orage. Gourdjieff said that having mastered all that the East had to say, he had now come to Europe to master the techniques of the West, so as to put at the service of the Intuitions of the East the historical and scientific methods of the West, and thus achieve a synthesis which is indispensable to mankind. This was what Orage felt Gourdjieff was here to do, and Orage wanted to be the man of the West that would meet this Eastern Spirit, and collaborate so as to bring about the great fusion.

For behind this was the idea that the East, as such, had failed and that only when taken up by the West can the Eastern intuitions prevail. Just as the West, with its techniques, can achieve nothing until it becomes a

servant to Eastern intuitions, of which Christianity is but one. As to the present state of the East, Orage was on the whole pessimistic. He told me that he knew that in China some great minds existed to-day; but he did not think that there were any in India. In fact he emphatically denied the existence of great men in India to-day.

These considerations, I believe, set in their true light the relations between Orage and Gourdjieff, which have been misunderstood, and which are one of the most interesting episodes in the history of recent thought. I had tried the Nietzschean tactics on Orage and attempted to convince him that he had gone to Fontainebleau not to follow Gourdjieff, but to overcome Gourdjieff. But that did not work: to the end, Gourdjieff remained the Master for Orage. A master whom he had failed to serve properly, and who, therefore, had not given him his reward.

Hence Orage's return from the American battlefield; hence the *New English Weekly* and Major Douglas: a comrade in arms this time and not a hard taskmaster; a man who would come to the kitchen and row the servants alongside of Orage and with a bigger voice. Thus Orage died, having rowed the servants of the world over the wireless a few hours before his death.

A series of failures? No. Orage's life was not a failure, but a series of adventures. The past never weighed on Orage. He had a soul open to the future; and a new adventure was always beginning. Orage lived a life of keen excitement and pleasure, more adventurous than that of any discoverer. At the time of his death, he

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was cherishing yet another, yet a finer dream, in which another trend in his life came to fruition also.

Alongside of this problem of thought, which led him into such adventures, he cultivated a problem of expression. The literary man in him ran parallel to the religious man.

He felt he was one of the great critics. In his own inmost mind, he looked upon himself as the critic; the greatest critic there had ever been. It was difficult to be with him long and intimately without being infected by this belief in himself, which was carefully kept hidden, but which could be detected in his tone and expressions. Besides which, he once said to me, walking in Chancery Lane – it must have been in 1920 or 1921 –

Literary criticism is as much of a science as mathematics; only it is much more complicated. The elements that go to the making of a literary formula are infinitely more delicate and difficult to appreciate properly. People do not understand this simply because they are ignorant. They think you can have this or that opinion of a book; that the opinion legitimately varies from one judge to the other, according to the judge's temperament. That is nonsense. A book has a value which can be assessed scientifically if you have the necessary knowledge and power of judging. I feel, more than that, I *know* that I can place a book or a poem where it belongs to a hair's breadth, without any possibility of controversy. But the ignorant will not accept my judgment because they do not possess the necessary knowledge.

He enlarged on this :

You, as a Frenchman, have no idea how ignorant present-day English

literary critics are. They know present literary production very well; and, within that boundary, can judge of the works, relatively to each other, fairly accurately. They know works that have been published within their own lifetime also fairly well: say, during the last ten or twenty years. Beyond that, they know very little. For instance, as a rule, they have not even read Meredith. When it comes to the great masterpieces of English literature, they know nothing at all; as a rule, have not even read them. And then, beyond that, there are the other literatures; French; Russian. How can you judge a novel if you do not know the Russian and the French novelists? And then, beyond that again, there is antiquity; and then, the East. . . . This means that our critics can only judge of present-day works by comparing them to one another. They have no standards: they cannot compare to-day's work with yesterday's, or with foreign work. They cannot be competent critics. They cannot even be competent journalists: a journalist's business is to know what is happening in China as well as here. They know nothing. They are frauds, who thrive on ephemeral literature, and are doomed to disappear with it.

He often said to me (and, I suppose, to whoever would hear), that his highest ambition was to write English prose with a French accent. He felt that the development of English prose had reached a critical period. He felt that after Swift the English had forgotten how to write their own language in prose. Proud as he was of the English achievement in poetry, which he set far above any other poetical achievement in the world, he coveted for England also the glory of great prose: of greater prose than

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England yet possesses. He felt that both Meredith and Hardy needed re-writing. He envied France her prose writers; and I think that, preposterously, this was at the source of his political opposition to France. For he felt that a nation does not triumph in art unless it triumphs in politics; he wanted France to be subservient to England in politics; not that he cared so much about politics; but because he felt that in that mood of superiority and triumph England would then take also the artistic crown from France. This he cared about supremely.

Possibly all this was because he did not really understand French, or the French, or French literature at all. In all our discussions I always came up against the blank fact that he judged French literature always in relationship to English work. I do not think he could even read French properly. But he had that high dream of France that all English intellectuals cherish: he credited the French with every literary virtue that he felt he did not possess. He was entirely English.

In fact, had he known French properly, he would probably have solved his problem of expression. Not that any imitation of the French will ever help the English: but a clear knowledge of what the French have done may help the English to do something else, that has to be done yet, in English.

He felt vaguely that this had been done by Swift; but he could not place Swift properly, as he somehow connected Swift with French prose: only he thought Swift better than anything the French had done. In this muddle, he was himself an illustration of his own

theory that what is mostly necessary is knowledge. For Swift is not French at all, or like the French. But as Orage put French prose above all prose that he knew, except Swift, he somehow put Swift into the category of French prose. What he really liked of Swift was the polemical writings. He felt there the presence of a master that he could follow. Swift really cared but little about the art of writing for its own sake, and in that he was most un-French; he happened to write the best kind of English prose, and to use it as an instrument for political purposes. So Orage felt, in the days when now and then he despaired of literature, that he also, like Swift, would put his best prose in polemical writing, in comments on politics and economics, in those 'Notes of the Week' in the *New Age*, which, at other times, he looked upon as 'rowing the servants.'

Anyway, here also Orage partly failed. Occasionally only did he achieve an expression, or construct a sentence with which he was pleased; oftener orally than in writing. And yet again, although he fell short of achievement, his writing was not lost and is not yet lost. Orage had the finest critical temperament probably of our period: with the reservation that he could judge well only of English things. His ignorance of other languages and cultures led him to amazing statements about foreign literatures and particularly about the books of the East, where literary standards are quite different from ours, and his.

One of the last passages between us illustrates many points of his temperament, and I think gives an insight into the state of his mind at the end. I

## A. R. Orage

published in November, 1933, in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, an account of my visit to Orage and Gourdjieff at Fontainebleau, during the month of February, 1923. In this, using the French present tense for a narrative in the past, as is often done in French, I wrote:

‘Mais Orage a vendu le *New Age* et il est à Fontainebleau. La littérature n’intéresse plus Orage.’

Someone, with evil intention, I suspect, went and put under his eyes this sentence ‘La littérature n’intéresse plus Orage,’ which in the context, merely means that in the month of February, 1923, Orage was overwhelmed by preoccupations of a non-literary nature. Orage was very angry, and accused me of having written that he had given up literature. My dissertations on the use of the present tense in French prose for narrative purposes failed entirely to convince or to pacify him. He obviously thought that I was quibbling and he kept repeating: ‘But you wrote that literature no longer interests me.’ I was delighted by the violence of his reaction, which revealed his passionate attachment to literature. So we agreed to draw up together a statement about his history since 1923 and about his present state of mind. He professed himself satisfied with this, which was accordingly published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* for June, 1933. I translate the chief points of the statement:

Gourdjieff had said, talking of Orage: he who comes to me a medical man, will go away a better medical man; he who comes to me a writer will go away a better writer. After ten years, Orage is still of opinion that Gourdjieff

spoke truth. Some time after my visit to Fontainebleau, Orage went to America to spread Gourdjieff’s ideas. After a failure in Chicago, due to Gourdjieff’s untimely interference (on this I have evidence from Chicago friends), Orage founded in New York groups of occultist studies. He also created, on his own account, groups for literary studies. This worked satisfactorily for several years (and Orage’s influence on literary America could be investigated with interesting results). Then Gourdjieff insisted on coming to New York: his authority and his personality generally proved unbearable to the American students, and the groups rapidly disintegrated. Orage gave it up and came back to London, where he founded the *New English Weekly*. . . . He remained, and remains, on friendly terms with Gourdjieff . . .

Orage is much preoccupied with matters of international politics and credit reform, but has nevertheless kept true to great literary plans. He insists that the Gourdjieff experience has made of him a better writer. As he sees it now, literature can be divided into three zones the journalistic, which deals with things of the day – the artistic books that last – and the zone of scripture. great inspired works. Orage’s ambition is to construct an *Art poétique* of inspiration; to teach mankind how to write, or to gather together, Scripture.

Such was Orage’s last dream, in which all he knew of literature was at last to be welded together with all he knew of religion. I saw him for the last time on September 12th, at the First Avenue Hotel: he gathered together Æ, Ruth Pitter, my wife and myself for a lunch of welcome to a great Provençal poet and his wife, the Peyres, who had come from their

## Denis Saurat

Mediterranean haunts. Orage had been the first to discover Peyre: even in 1920, Orage had published English poems of Peyre in the *New Age*; just as Orage had been the first to discover Ruth Pitter, even earlier. This was a father gathering some of his children round him, with Æ., I suppose, as the benevolent uncle and myself as the representative of the outside world, the unknown guest without whom a gathering is not complete; for as we parted, Orage, in great spirits, said to my wife: 'I have much to say to your husband, but at present he is not yet ready to bear it.' Well, he will never tell me, but I think I can guess. In self-protection, I wish, therefore, to support Æ.'s idea of what should be done, as Æ. expounded it in the *New English Weekly* after Orage's death.

Scattered through the files of the old *New Age*, especially between the years 1912 and 1922, are a mass of critical essays from which one of the

best books of literary criticism in the English language could be compiled. Two volumes of selections already exist; but they are not well done: the pieces were selected, I suppose, by Orage himself at some period when some bias or other prevented his mind from recognizing his own best work. A frequent thing, even with great minds. A properly competent literary craftsman, a man not likely to be influenced by any of Orage's own prejudices, ought to be commissioned to select and publish a volume of critical essays by Orage. English literature can little afford to allow such a mind to go into oblivion. He had many friends; it is the duty of his friends whom he helped so often, so selflessly and so much, to help him now that he is helpless, and to do for him what he could not do himself: to gather and present to posterity the best of himself.

# Flowers on the Desk

by E. M. Delafield

---

YOUNG Doris, dusting Miss Clement's desk, carefully moved in succession the glass vase that contained the anemones, the green earthenware bowl of daffodils, and the tall jar of white lilac. The dusting accomplished, she replaced the flowers.

Anemones: Miss Caversham.

Daffodils: Miss Greening.

White Lilac: Mrs. Lee-Lake.

Sometimes, Miss Caversham and Miss Greening were visited simultaneously by the same inspiration. (Not Mrs. Lee-Lake. She had more money than the others and bought better and more unusual flowers.)

Once, Miss Greening and Miss Caversham had each appeared with a bunch of the first—or, in the case of one of them, the second—primroses of the year.

Doris remembered well the look they had exchanged, in the office downstairs. A look at once resentful, wistful, surprised and very, very faintly amused.

Miss Caversham, the younger of the two, and, in the opinion of young Doris, the nicer, had gulped and spoken.

'I'll tell you what, Greening. We'll put them all together in a bowl. They'll look much *more* like that. And they can be from us both.'

Doris had admired this gesture very much indeed. Even Miss Greening, who was not always amiable—and was in any case jealous of Miss Caversham for being young and nice-looking and amusing—had responded.

The primroses—not, at their best, a large group—had jostled one another in a little vase on the desk of Miss Clement. Whether or not she ever knew that this gift was a joint one from Miss Greening (Filing and Accounts) and Miss Caversham (Shorthand and Typing) young Doris had no idea. She seldom saw Miss Clement except when she carried tea into the inner room, and on those occasions Miss Clement did not speak to her but merely nodded, or sometimes made a vexed sound because she had been interrupted.

Miss Clement had personality.

This was said of her some fifteen or sixteen times in the course of every week by Mrs. Lee-Lake, Miss Caversham and Miss Greening, all of whom discussed their employer, and one another, whenever a break in the routine work of the office made conversation possible.

'Clement's a devil—honestly she is. How does she think I'm going to get all this stuff done now? She might just as well have given it to me this

## E. M. Delafield

morning. I was kicking my heels the whole morning, doing nothing, and then at *three* o'clock in the afternoon, she throws all this muck at my head!

'My dear, what do you think she's asked *my* department for? The *whole* of the correspondence about that Birmingham place, that goes back to the year dot—and half of it's in her own desk, only nobody can get at it.'

'I don't know why we stand for it. Let's walk out on her in a body.'

'She wouldn't care if we did. Just ring that bloody bell of hers and tell young Doris to send out and get another staff and have 'em there by three o'clock.'

'She'd get them too. Clement's like that.'

'You can't say she hasn't got personality.'

You couldn't. The personality of Miss Clement held the whole office together during a fearful epidemic of influenza, started by Mrs. Lee-Lake, who was a widow with one little girl.

The little girl developed influenza.

Mrs. Lee-Lake nursed her child—came to the office—did her work with one hand and telephoned to her home with the other—looked pale and distracted, and finally developed influenza herself.

She then stayed at home: but by this time Miss Greening had got influenza.

Miss Caversham did Mrs. Lee-Lake's work, a good deal of Miss Greening's, and some of her own. The rest was done by Doris, who could use a typewriter quite well.

'You ought to go to bed, Greening.

I'm certain you've got a temperature,' said Miss Caversham, herself flushed and heavy-eyed.

'It's all right,' Miss Greening responded, with the short, dry cough that she had been emitting more and more frequently all day.

A moment later she said:

'I couldn't sleep at all last night. I had pains all over me. I must have taken about ten aspirins.'

'Why don't you tell Her you're ill, and go off? I can manage,' said Miss Caversham bravely. Miss Greening shook her head, evidently feeling beyond speech.

Doris surveyed them both with concern. How marvellous they were, sticking to the job like that!

An electric bell whirled furiously from the inner office.

Caversham leapt.

When she came back she said triumphantly: 'Clement says she's told our Mrs. Double-Ell to take a fortnight off. She asked if we could manage and I said Of course.'

'Of course,' echoed Miss Greening, shivering violently.

'You'd better have a cup of hot tea. Here, young Doris, is that kettle boiling?'

It was.

Doris had foreseen that a great deal of hot tea would be required in the outer office, in the course of the next few days.

Miss Greening stuck to her guns and wouldn't give in. She twice turned so faint that she was obliged to lie down on the floor—since there was nothing else on which to lie—and to send Doris out to get her some brandy.

She did not contract the pneu-

## Flowers on the Desk

monia predicted for her hourly by Miss Caversham. But it did sometimes seem as though she had developed a permanent cough. It went on long after she had passed her influenza on to Miss Caversham. Not that Miss Caversham admitted to influenza. She merely said, some twenty times a day, that she thought she must be going to die. Her head seemed to be stuffed with nettles, and her throat hurt.

She sent Doris out to get her some aspirin; and when the little bottle was on the table beside her typewriter she swallowed one tablet after another in the most reckless way, between gulps of hot tea.

But the work got done.

And Mrs. Lee-Lake heroically returned to her post a week before she need have done so. She had sent her little girl to the country.

She still looked very ill—though not so ill as Miss Greening and Miss Caversham—but she explained that she couldn't let down Miss Clement and the job.

Thus, more like a home for incurables than an office, Miss Clement's business establishment continued to show its full complement of workers.

Then young Doris herself became the prey of a streaming cold.

Not influenza. Certainly not.

Merely a very, very bad cold.

The illnesses of Mrs. Lee-Lake, Miss Greening and Miss Caversham had had a certain reticence—a modicum of dignity.

That of young Doris had none.

She sneezed and sneezed, and blew her nose and coughed with a violence that altogether eclipsed the more

modest, although not less persistent, affliction of Miss Greening.

'Really, Doris,' said everybody, outraged.

Doris felt terribly ashamed of herself.

'Please, Miss Greening,' she hinted, 'you don't think I ought to take a day or two at home perhaps?'

'I don't think you're really ill enough for that, are you, Doris? We've all had this frightful cold, I know, but, after all, we managed to carry on, didn't we? Mrs. Lee-Lake only went home because the child was ill.'

The austere manner in which Miss Greening spoke made Doris feel more abashed than ever. She looked round, almost involuntarily, for the younger and more human Miss Caversham.

'The first hundred years are the hardest, I believe. After that you get used to it,' said Miss Caversham blithely.

That was the kind of thing that Doris understood. It caused her to giggle feebly, and made her feel better.

Miss Caversham further said:

'What about some tea? Get the kettle on, young Doris.'

They made Doris drink a cup of tea.

'Now you'll be all right,' declared Miss Caversham. 'And don't you dare sneeze in front of Her, either. The penalty is probably death.'

'You'd better let somebody else take in the tea,' Miss Greening said.

'I'll go,' volunteered Miss Caversham.

'Or I will,' said Miss Greening, suddenly very thin-lipped.

But it was, after all, Doris who went into the Presence.



## E. M. Delafield

Mrs. Lee-Lake, in conference with the Chief, sent for her in order to give some special instructions about an express letter. Unfortunately, just as she had given them, Miss Clement changed her mind.

'Look here, Lake, we shall have to alter that.'

Mrs. Lee-Lake halted, letter in hand.

Doris, as though turned to stone, remained poised on one foot in the doorway.

'Shut that door,' commanded Miss Clement.

'And wait.'

She waved her cigarette at Doris.

'Give me back that letter. Sit down.'

Mrs. Lee-Lake handed back the letter and sat down.

Doris, motionless, watched them both from under her eyelids. Mrs. Lee-Lake, privileged to sit, yet did so in a respectful manner. She wore an expression that was at once alert, deferential, intelligent, and wholly artificial.

Even young Doris could see that it was artificial.

The natural expression of Mrs. Lee-Lake, as seen every day and all day in the outer office, was one of strain, anxiety and fatigue. When she smiled, she looked very nice, although still tired—but that was not the same smile as the one that now hovered, like a nervous actor waiting for a cue, behind her expression of alertness.

Sitting at the desk was, of course, Miss Clement.

Even though her back was arched like a bow, above the blotting paper, the files, the letters and the telephone

pad, her height and her slenderness were evident.

Smoke clouds surrounded her distinguished head—for Miss Clement never ceased smoking.

Her hair lay in thick, red-brown waves close to her head, and was cut very short. Her face was pale, narrow, clean cut ; and she looked, to the eyes of Doris, more than middle-aged.

Actually, the total of Miss Clement's years had been discovered, by many intricate calculations on the part of her staff, to be thirty-eight. Older than Miss Caversham: younger than Mrs. Lee-Lake: much younger than Miss Greening.

'She looks younger than she is. It's being tall and slight,' had said Mrs. Lee-Lake, who was neither of these things.

'She varies,' Miss Caversham had replied. 'I've seen her look seventy; and I've seen her look two-and-a-half. On the same day.'

Neither of these extremes, however, had to-day been achieved by Miss Clement.

She straightened her long back, lit a fresh cigarette from the stump of the old one, and then hit the table with her fist so that the things on it—and also Mrs. Lee-Lake and Doris—jumped.

'A business can be run by women just as well as by men,' she exclaimed sharply. 'What difference does it make, provided the work gets properly done?'

'None, of course,' assented Mrs. Lee-Lake.

'These old-fashioned City firms . . . ' said her employer, irritably tapping the edge of the letter she still held against the side of the desk.

'We'll re-write that answer, Lake.

## Flowers on the Desk

I think I've let them down much too lightly.'

'Shall Doris come back in ten minutes?'

Miss Clement turned large unseeing eyes on Doris.

'Tea,' she said curtly.

When Doris brought the tea, Miss Clement was standing up, talking. ' . . . and it isn't as though many a woman wasn't supporting a dependant. Look at you!'

Mrs. Lee-Lake bent her head, as though endeavouring to obey this difficult behest.

'Look at Greening and her mother. I believe the old woman's an invalid. Look at Caversham, with a father and brother both out of a job. Look at——'

Miss Clement looked at Doris.

'How many are you at home?' she abruptly inquired.

'I live with my auntie,' said Doris, nearly swooning.

'Does your aunt do any work?'

'She does dressmaking and loose covers, Miss Clement.'

'Keeps herself, I suppose.'

'Yes, Miss Clement.'

'There you are! Why is every woman supposed to be economically dependent on . . . Lake! Will you *please* remember that I like my tea poured through the strainer?'

Doris rightly judged that her presence was no longer required. She retired into the draughtiest corner of the outer office, where the oldest of the typewriters stood upon the most rickety of the tables, and continued to work at the play that she had been secretly writing for some time.

It had long been the ambition of young Doris to write; and she had

heard it said that a play, if successful, brought in a great deal of money.

Accordingly she was writing a play. It was about a young man who worked in an office. Doris was sick of women, for she had neither brother, a father, nor any boy friend. She had, however, imagination—and on this she drew, backing it at the same time with personal experience.

'Act II.' she rapidly typed.

*An office in the heart of the City.*

*Enter PETER ARCHDALE, a middle-aged clerk, and LESLIE LORRIMER. Each is carrying a huge bunch of roses.*

PETER. Goodness. This is going to be a hot day. I'm tired already. Is the Chief here yet?

LESLIE. Not yet, old man. I say, don't you think he's been looking frightfully pale lately?

PETER. Yes, I do. It's been worrying me. He doesn't take enough time off.

LESLIE. No, he doesn't, does he. Excuse me, old man, but are those roses to give to the Chief?

PETER. As a matter of fact, they are. I see you've got some yourself.

LESLIE (*anxiously*). You don't mind, do you? I didn't know you wanted to give him flowers to-day.

PETER. As a matter of fact, it's exactly two years to-day since I first came to this office.

LESLIE. Oh, how marvellous! We ought to celebrate. Shall I get in some cakes for tea?

PETER. How perfectly angelic of you—but you can't afford it, can you?

(*A bell sounds.*)

LESLIE. I'll go.

PETER. No, I will.

LESLIE. No really, I will.

(*The bell rings again.*)

## E. M. Delafield

PETER. My God, he's one mass of nerves to-day, poor pet

(Exit PETER. LESLIE, *left alone*,  
*thoughtfully* arranges his roses  
*in a vase*.)

'How's the great work, young Doris?'

'I'm starting the second Act, Miss Caversham. It opens ever so quietly—just real life, you know, the way Mr. Van Druten writes—and then I shall work it up to a climax.'

'Sounds all right,' said Miss Caversham, lighting a cigarette.

Young Doris hesitated, knitting her brows.

'Would you say that, nowadays, it's all one whether it's a man or a woman that's running the show?' she demanded at last.

'Absolutely,' Miss Caversham declared. 'Look at Clement! Why, she runs this office exactly as if she was a man.'

'That's what I thought,' said young Doris.

### OVERHEARD

DOROTHY PARKER specializes in what is known as the dirty crack, yet she has the gentlest, most disarming demeanour of anyone I know. One dreadful week-end the other guests were all of the kind who wear soiled batik and bathe infrequently, if ever. I could not help wondering how they had been rounded up, and where they might be found at other times. Mrs. Parker looked at them pensively. 'I think,' she whispered, 'that they crawl back into the woodwork.'—ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT.

ONCE Sinclair Lewis got an ardent letter from a Southern girl, who offered first of all to be his secretary, since she was mad to meet him, and secondly to do anything for him. 'And when I say anything,' she wrote, 'I mean *anything*.' Taking care of such mail is a delight of Mrs. Lewis. In her answer she noted that Mr. Lewis was provided with a competent secretary, and that she herself did everything else. 'And when I say everything,' wrote Mrs. Lewis, 'I mean *everything*.'

# From Carmina Burana

## by Basil Blackett

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*Nobilis, precor*

GRACIOUS Lady, pity!  
Have pity on my pain!  
The sword-thrust of your beauty  
Has pierced me: I am slain.  
My being's inmost city  
Your love has captive ta'en.  
Aid! Oh aid!  
Graceless Love  
Rules all above.  
Aid! Oh aid!

Entangled are your tresses  
With the fibres of my heart:  
Close the fire presses:  
Anguished is my smart.  
My soul in deep distress is  
And all my powers depart.  
Aid! Oh aid!  
Graceless Love  
Rules all above.  
Aid! Oh aid!

Your lips with fragrance rarer  
Than roses scent the air:  
You're lovelier and dearer  
Than all the girls there are:  
Than lily you are fairer,  
Than honey sweeter far.  
Aid! Oh aid!  
Graceless Love  
Rules all above.  
Aid! Oh aid!

## Basil Blackett

Your beauty mocks the splendour  
    Of heaven's pavilion.  
My humble suit I tender  
    At Venus' judgment throne.  
My life I must surrender  
    Unless you help your own.  
        Aid! Oh aid!  
    Graceless Love  
    Rules all above.  
        Aid! Oh aid!

### *Potatoes exquisiti*

FELLOW toppers fine and dandy,  
Even if your thirst be scanty,  
Pass the bottle quick – be handy –  
Fill your mugs with ale, no shandy;  
Toss your wine off· swill your brandy:  
    Drink contagious:  
And be sure the jests you bandy  
    Are outrageous.

If you cannot carry liquor,  
Out you go, Sir! Slick, slick, slicker!  
This is not the place to dicker:  
Nothing spoils a party quicker  
    Than temperance:  
Proves a man without a flicker  
    Of social sense.

Lurks there here some lout uncivil  
Who with heady wine would cavil?  
To the doorway show the devil:  
Death would be a lesser evil:  
We don't want to share our revel  
    With a blister.  
If he isn't drinking level,  
    Let him fester.

Comes your turn to lead the table:  
Drink ahead of all the rabble,  
Till your legs begin to wobble  
And your speech is senseless babel.  
There remains where all's unstable  
    One salvation:  
Drain the biggest bowls you're able  
    In rotation.

## From Carmina Burana

Wine and water, keep your station!  
God and Goddess, no flirtation!  
Liber is his appellation:  
Liberty is his vocation.  
Water means annihilation  
    Of vinous graces:  
Wine sustains debilitation  
    By her embraces.

Godhead well you may ascribe her:  
With the name of Sea Queen bribe her:  
Only some indecent giber,  
As Bacchus' consort would describe her.  
He of water an imbibor  
    Profanation:  
Baptism for Father Liber  
    Is damnation.

# Into the Dark

## by Humbert Wolfe

---

**I**F I must go into the dark again,  
I shall know the way without a guide.  
First let the cage plunge in the mine-shaft of the heart,  
in the coal-pit of the stomach,  
down, down, down,  
through emptiness, through terror, and with none  
to wind again when the long day is done.

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel –  
and the King is held in the galleries of thine hair,  
with no lamp to guide him to the face.  
Only the black water trickling in the six-foot tunnel,  
and far-off a shrill desperate whinny  
as of a pit-pony.  
abandoned, and left behind –  
or of something else waiting and blind.

If I must go into the dark again  
among those who are benefited, being chastized,  
I shall know the way. I shall not strike my head  
against the low roof, but crouch like an animal.  
I shall not think of the light for fear of madness.  
I shall think only of my pick and the coal-face,  
and not of that other face at all, of that face  
that launcht a thousand ships, and sank them  
galley after galley, barquentine and bark  
utterly in the dark.

# Finance and the Arts

by Eimar O'Duffy

---

WHEN you go to a picture-house nowadays, the first thing that you notice, or ought to notice, is that the music which strikes up before the performance comes from a box, like soap or baked beans, instead of from half a dozen or more musicians. On your way home afterwards you will probably see a violinist playing in the gutter, and if you take the trouble to question him you will find that he is a former member of an orchestra 'thrown out of employment by this canned music.' Then, having given him sixpence or so, you will walk on with your heart full of pity and your head full of bitter reflections on 'this mechanistic age'. You may even go so far as to tell yourself that the world would be far better off without all this machinery, and to censure mankind, as Sir James Jeans has done, for allowing its moral development to lag so much behind its scientific development.

If you do, you will be behaving (excuse me for putting it so bluntly) like a well-meaning idiot. For instead of feeling sorry for the musician, indignant against machinery, and censorious against mankind – instead of *feeling* at all, in fact – you ought to be *thinking*; and two minutes clear thought, if you will free your mind from certain

arbitrary preconceptions, will make you realize that the thing is not so much a tragedy or a crime as a piece of absurdity. The world, surely, is not the poorer (in a material sense, at any rate) for the possession of a machine. It is the richer. Why, then, must the musician starve? You know from the papers that we are suffering from a 'glut' of wheat, milk, coffee, cotton, and so on, and that Lancashire is almost bankrupt because it cannot sell the shirts it produces in profusion. Is it not absurd then that, just because a machine is doing his work, the food and clothes that this musician wants to buy should be added to the heaps that are being burnt, and that Lancashire should lose one more customer? The musical machine, whatever its other faults, is not responsible for that fantastic arrangement. Neither is the moral sense of mankind: for it is now universally recognized that the State must intervene to make the social system work more humanely, and statesmen in all countries are honestly doing their best to attain that object. In fact, if good-will and industrial efficiency could solve the economic problem it would have been solved long ago.

We must think a little deeper to understand why in such circumstances our musician has to starve. The posi-



## Eimar O'Duffy

tion being essentially absurd, it must arise from inefficiency *somewhere* in our economic system and from stupidity *somewhere* in our moral preconceptions. The latter is easily traced. We insist that a man must work for his livelihood even when society is so rich as not to require his labour. The machine is doing this man's work as a musician; his services are not required in any other capacity either, as all industries are 'overproducing'; obviously there is no need for the man to work. Our objection to paying him in idleness is therefore purely moral, and at the same time wrong. The economic reason arises from it automatically. We have devised a system under which incomes come into existence only as a result of work being done by a man. If then a machine is employed to do the work formerly done by a man, that man's money income is wiped out – and yet the goods he would have bought with it are there on the market all the same. That is the fundamental flaw in our economic system. It works automatically. It destroys human livelihoods not because we are too immoral to change it, but because we are too moral – ultimately because we are too stupid.

This explains why it is that the efforts of our statesmen can do so little to remedy the musician's predicament. If he is not working, the only money they can get to give him is the money of other people. If it is taken from them, they must do without the things they would have bought with it, and so the amount of wheat to be burnt and of shirts to lie unsold in the shops remains the same as ever. There is merely a transference of sacrifice

from one man to another. The total burden of discomfort is the same as before, and real wealth continues to go to waste.

Note too that the displacement of the musician by the machine is the result of automatic compulsion by the financial system. The audience does not prefer canned music to an orchestra. The cinema proprietor does not wish to drive musicians into the gutter. He has to do it if his enterprise is to pay. Why? Because the financial system is operated on the principle that in every form of production the saving of *money-costs* must be the prime consideration. We shall see the reason later on. The undertaking that disobeys this injunction is *automatically* disabled in the struggle for existence which, as we shall also see, is itself produced by financial conditions. Thus each in turn is compelled to scrap the expensive man for the cheaper machine, whether the undertaking or its customers like it or not.

Let us take another case, less poignant, but not less absurd. A hard-up young novelist meets a friend in the street, and the friend shamefacedly says: 'I'm afraid I haven't read your latest book, old chap. In these hard times, you know, seven and sixpence is a bit of a pull.' The novelist, not understanding economics, hurries on, as it is a wet day and his shoes let in the weather. He cannot afford to get them soled, because seven and sixpence is a bit of a pull in these hard times. He cannot buy the shoemaker's wares for the same reason that his friend (who happens to be a shoemaker) cannot buy his, namely, that he is short of money.

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Mechanization will not explain this away. Here are two producers unable to exchange their goods because of a deficiency of the medium of exchange. The whole community is in a similar position. It can produce goods at a rate equal to all its requirements, but it cannot buy and sell them at the same rate. Purchasing power lags behind productive power because the rate of issue of purchasing power is too slow.

Why is that? The reason follows from what has been said above. Purchasing power only comes into existence as *costs* incurred in production (namely, as wages, salaries, and dividends), and these costs can never be equal to the prices at which goods are sold, because the prices include other costs of financial origin which are not distributed as purchasing power at the time when the goods are on sale. What those costs are I do not propose to explain here, as my purpose is not to analyze the financial system, but merely to show its effects on art and artists, and to induce the latter to analyze it for themselves. Conversion by argument is all very well for the general public, but people with intellectual gifts ought to use them.<sup>1</sup> I therefore content myself

<sup>1</sup> It may be well, however, to explain to the uninitiated, of whom there seems to be an appalling number among artists, that only a small fraction of money in these days consists of cash. Nine-tenths of the money in use consists of what is called Bank Credit. Owing to the use of cheques, the bankers can and do 'lend' up to ten pounds for every pound in their tills. This is what is meant when we say that the banks 'create money out of nothing.' Before this device was invented, all money was real money issued by the State, to which the right of issuing money properly belongs, counterfeiters being heavily punished – as they still are. The State has virtually abdicated its function of money issue (Currency and Bank Notes Act, 1928), and the community is entirely dependent for new money on the bankers' 'loans' to

with stating the conclusion which I and others have reached by analysis, that mankind is being kept in a state of artificial poverty in spite of being equipped with all the means of prosperity, and that this is due to purely financial causes – that is to say, to a wrong system of book-keeping. Since money is a private monopoly, and the interest of monopolists is to keep the commodity they deal in scarce and dear, the economic life of the community is governed, in face of the natural facts, by the dominant idea of scarcity and the consequent necessity for hard work. That is why the reduction of money-costs is always, as I have said, the prime object of the system, and the reduction of money incomes its inevitable result. The ship is always being allowed to rot for the sake of a pennorth of tar. Why, for instance, are so many of our buildings ugly? We have no lack of artists; but beauty involves money-costs. These costs would all go into the pockets of artists as purchasing power.

It is important, however, to realize that this is not due to deliberate 'villainy' on the part of the financial

industry; that is to say, we can only obtain new money by going into debt to a handful of private individuals. As all new capital undertakings are financed by these loans (not by savings, as is commonly supposed), it follows that the richer the community becomes, the deeper it gets into debt. In effect, the community's assets are called its debts.

It is worth noting that when Kitson, Douglas, and others first exposed the fact that the banks create money, the bankers repudiated the allegation as a slander; but since it has been proved to the hilt they now defend it as legitimate and the only kind of sound finance. The first banker to blow the gaff was McKenna. Leaf was strenuously denying it in 1929, and may be still for all I know. (See Keynes's *Treatise on Money*, Soddy's *Money Versus Man*, and Douglas's *Monopoly of Credit*.)

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magnates who run the system and are the real government of the world. They are all too wealthy to hanker crudely for more money. Some of them, undoubtedly, are materialists, whose object is to retain and extend the power that money gives them; but many, perhaps most, are idealists who really believe that it is good for the world to be kept hard at work by the discipline of necessity. As Ibsen and Shaw have shown, the idealist is the greatest of public dangers; and the financial idealist is the most dangerous of them all. He wants to keep mankind industrious and thrifty; he wants industry to be efficient for that purpose; and he cannot see that this ideal is more wildly impossible than that of the most fantastic 'utopian' dreamer: for the more efficient industry becomes, the greater will be its output in proportion to the work done, and the smaller the incomes it will distribute through employment.

Now, what will be the effect of this system on art and artists? To begin with we can make the general premiss that under such a system the quantity and quality of art that will be produced will be determined (just as in the case of groceries, clothes, and houses) not by such natural factors as the supply of workers and materials available and the needs of the public, but by the artificial factor of the supply of money made available by the bankers acting on purely financial considerations; and that even so there will not be enough money in circulation to buy the output, and hence an apparent overproduction. The community will be starved of art, as of everything else, while works of art

remain unproduced or unsold, and producers of art go hungry. But the case of art will be worse than that of any other industry, because art is essentially different from other industries. In the first place, the industrialist can always 'cut his losses' by slowing down production, whereas the artist must produce whether he can find purchasers or not, so he goes on 'glutting' his market to his own destruction. In the second place, art is a luxury trade, and is therefore the first to suffer in times of slump and the last to recover in times of boom. These are the fundamental reasons why art is the most precarious of professions in this Age of Abundance.

But we can go much farther than that, and show that art is the victim of finance in a hundred unsuspected ways. Indeed there is scarcely a single ill from which art and artists suffer that is not directly or indirectly attributable to the system. There must be few artists who have not experienced the opposition of their parents at the outset of their careers, and been forced to waste their early years at some uncongenial profession, simply because the fond parent takes it for granted that art means poverty. One result of this is that large numbers of writers get no preliminary training in their craft. They have to learn as they go along, and the British Museum Library is cluttered up with prentice work which the authors, in their mature years, wish vainly to destroy. Again, until he has 'made his name', the average artist has to choose between privation, taking up another profession which he will eventually drop, and prostituting his talents to the service

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of commerce. The poet is in that predicament all his life. Indeed, to be born a poet, unless one has a private income, is the greatest curse that can befall a man in this twentieth century of civilization. We shall never know the amount of art lost to the world by the mere starvation of artists. The dramatic case of Chatterton springs to the mind at once. Shelley would never have been heard of if he had been poor. Neither would Samuel Butler, all of whose works were published at a loss at his own expense.

All this is quite unnecessary in an Age of Plenty. If a crew of ten castaways on a desert island included a poet, the others might be excused for insisting that he should do his share of work, and write his poems in his spare time – or starve. But if, by the aid of a machine, the community could produce enough food and clothes for all by the work of nine, then they could afford to let him write all day so that they could enjoy the results in the evening; and modern Europe could do the same, instead of forcing its artists into drudgery as if it were short of ploughmen and clerks.

We now come to another factor. It is a commonplace that in modern civilization, generally speaking, bad art pays and good art does not. At first sight this would seem to imply that public taste is essentially bad; and that in turn would imply that it has steadily degenerated with the passage of time. The great Athenian dramatists were popular favourites. So was Shakespeare. If people to-day prefer Warwick Deeping to W. B. Yeats, how, an objector may ask, is finance to blame?

In several ways.

(1) Popular education has created a public which, in Shaw's words, knows how to read and knows nothing else. An entirely uneducated public does not bother about art, or else takes what the artists give it. But a demi-semi-educated public wants tosh, and a commercialized civilization will produce same as per specification. The education which produced this public is a cheap education designed to suit financial requirements.

(2) In the unnecessary competitive struggle forced on mankind by artificial scarcity, the people who have no impersonal interests or artistic inclinations to hamper them will 'get on' at the expense of those who have. Thus the cultured classes who would buy good art receive less than their share of purchasing power. Who wants good books, music, and pictures more than the student, the struggling young professional man, or the artist? And these cannot afford them. Thus, while a public is created for bad art, the good artist's public is artificially restricted.

(3) In the stress and struggle, the insecurity and consequent anxiety engendered by the system, and the dull, meaningless lives it imposes on countless men and women, the higher appreciative qualities are starved or crushed out of existence. People consequently seek in literature and music not a means of enriching their lives, but a way of escape from them. A vast quantity of art has been produced for purely commercial purposes to fill this need. Such art must necessarily be bad art, and bad art, like bad money, drives out good.

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For the remaining points I must quote, with apologies, from my book, *Life and Money*. This is better than making a rehash.

(4) 'An ominous sign of the times is the growing contempt for intellect – due, I suppose, to its being a quality of no great value in a scramble to "get on". The appearance in our vocabulary of the new word "high-brow" is typical. In the days before popular education the ordinary man looked up to and admired intellect. Now he is taught to regard it as of no account, and hence the invention of the word. "High-brow" is simply a derogatory term for high intelligence used by people of low intelligence. No popular writer would like to say "People of higher intelligence than mine think so-and-so." Instead he says "High-brows think so-and-so," and by thus giving the thinker a bad name, condemns his opinion (for the humble reader) before he quotes it.'

(5) 'The urgent necessity to *sell* has resulted in the intensive development of advertising in every shape and form. . . . It is making subtle havoc of our minds. The advertising expert has learnt to play on every human emotion that can serve his purpose, and by constantly strumming on the notes is putting them out of tune. Emotional language, unless when reproducing emotion genuinely felt (as by an artist) is necessarily insincere. The advertisement writer does not feel the emotion he is writing down: he is only concerned with the effect on the reader. If, for instance, a serious

writer says that the love of a mother for her child is the most beautiful thing in nature, he is uttering a truth. If an advertisement writer says it, he is merely trying to sell a new baby-food. Such a purpose cheapens the emotion he is exploiting and the words that express it. The language of pathos becomes "sob-stuff", and that of sincere purpose becomes "uplift"; and the uncritical reader soon becomes incapable of distinguishing the true from the false. Thus he will be really moved by a "sob-stuff" advertisement to buy a present for his sweetheart, and will snigger at a touching passage in a good book or play.'

(6) 'The deliberate debauching of the public taste by the newspapers. In order to swell up the circulation necessary to win advertisers (a purely financial necessity) the very lowest elements of the community must be raked in as readers; and in order to attract them the whole newspaper must be dragged down to their level of character and intelligence. Both proprietors and editors have the insolence to call this "giving the public what it wants"; but it is nothing of the sort. The majority of the public do not want the muck that is flung at them. Since, however, it is all they can get, they put up with it, and are hardly aware of the harm it does them. That, apparently, does not matter to editor or owner. If a "popular" paper cannot maintain its circulation, and thus grab, for itself and its advertisers, a sufficiency of the inadequate money supply, down it goes, its

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shareholders are ruined, and its staff thrown on the street.'

Finally, the public intelligence is being constantly subjected by the 'Big Names' in the press and on the wireless to the reiteration of the dogmas of financial economics which, as I shall show in a moment, are ridiculous nonsense. If people are taught to reason incorrectly on the subject on which their bread and butter depends, they are not likely to do any better in other matters.

Mention of the newspapers reminds me of another way in which these play havoc with literature. There was a time when the unknown writer had a choice between scores of different periodicals with different owners and more or less independent editors on the look-out for 'promising stuff'. That is all done away with. Under the stress of competition – again the result of the inadequate money supply – the whole press has been amalgamated into a few groups, each with a 'policy' ordained by the owner, and edited syndically by mere employees. (Observe once more how the reduction of costs – and consequently of incomes distributed – is always the prime object of finance. Amalgamation has no advantages from any other point of view.) The one aim of the owner being to make money, there is no attempt to foster young talent. 'Big Names' are what is wanted, and big prices are paid for them, no matter what sort of tosh they may produce, while the young author who would give of his best for a moderate return gets nothing but rejection slips. The owners do not

even know their own silly business well enough to see that they are killing off many goslings who might in the future lay golden eggs. Quick returns, not long views, are the only things that count in the financial scramble.

Of a thousand features of the general massacre of the arts now in progress, I can only specify two. Firstly there is the destruction of the theatre by the cinema, instanced not only in the constantly recurring failure of excellent plays in London, but in the general disappearance of the little provincial theatres. The reason, once again, is not artistic but financial: it has nothing to do with the capacity of producers and the desires of consumers, but with book-keeping. A cinema film amasses virtually all its costs at the outset of its career, and is therefore a better financial proposition than a play, whose costs are continuous. It is a piece of capital investment paying dividends over a long period, during which the plant and employees are turning out more, whereas a play only pays so long as it runs, and the plant and employees are creating money costs all the time. A film, moreover, is an example of mass production and mechanism, and therefore its costs bear a smaller ratio to its selling price than those of a play, which is a piece of craftsmanship reconstructed *de novo* night after night. This would not matter a brass farthing under a natural system of economics: the two arts could flourish side by side if the costs could be distributed entirely as purchasing power. Under a finance-run system, however, the costly human production must go under to the relatively cheaper mechanized one.

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The theatre need not hope to save itself by agitating for exemption from entertainments tax: that is equivalent to asking for relief from a fleabite when one is bleeding to death from the lungs. The theatre will perish – or go on only as a place of sensual delight – unless the financial system is changed.

The plight of music is as bad. This art suffers particularly from the cheapening of the emotions referred to above. If people were not compelled to live unreal and fruitless lives they would not tolerate, much less demand, such stimulants as jazz or such drugs as crooning. Music, too, suffers more than any other art from mechanization. So long as we live under a system that measures costs by financial instead of natural methods, the machine will not serve men, but subjugate and starve them. If that system is allowed to go on indefinitely (its lease of power, remember, dates only from 1694), the only music left to us will be canned music. Composers, being artists, will starve sooner than not compose; but performers are under no such urge. People will decline to enter such a dangerous trade.

Let us now turn to the art I myself am most concerned with – literature. In addition to what has already been said, a few more points may be noted. We have seen that what the financial system seeks most to avoid is the issue of a sufficiency of money. If this produced actual starvation on a large scale there would be a revolution sooner or later, and to prevent this there has arisen the device of providing the poorer classes, not with money, but with *things* paid for by others. The Social Services and

State Education are examples. Free public libraries are another. By this device the author is compelled to subsidize, through the rates, the free distribution of his own wares. Would any tradesman submit to such an imposition? Yet its infliction on the precarious profession of authorship is taken for granted. Then there is the growth of popular libraries where a single copy of a book which has produced a miserable ninepence for the author may go the round of a couple of score of readers. Work out the fraction of a farthing each has paid to the author for his entertainment. The existence of these libraries is entirely due to the shortage of purchasing power, and it is steadily killing the habit of book-buying.

The stress of competition is forcing literature down to the level of a mere trade. Observe the blatancy of the modern publisher's advertising, with the names of best-selling authors writ large like BEECHAM'S PILLS. Authors, too, are driven to use devices still eschewed by the learned professions. They 'push' themselves and one another; they have reduced criticism to an adulatory farce ('This is quite the greatest masterpiece I have read this afternoon'); they employ publicity agents like film stars (one of these once wrote to me offering, for a consideration, to 'bombard' editors with information about me); and they often deliberately write down to their public. The state of criticism, by the way, is a peculiarly financial imposition. It is just as improper for a novelist to criticize his fellows as for the members of any other profession; but they are compelled to do it to supplement the

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meagre earnings of their books. For the best-seller who does it there is no excuse whatever. He is merely supplementing his riches.

We can forecast the future of the profession (if the present state of things continues) with tolerable accuracy. There is money in books; and if there is money in anything the financiers will take it over sooner or later, just as they have taken over the greater part of industry – people who can create money out of nothing can get anything they want for nothing (read Upton Sinclair's account of how they gobbled up William Fox's film business). Once an industry is taken over by financiers it is run on purely financial principles – low costs and quick returns. The publisher of the future will not be a gentleman interested in literature who incidentally makes a living by it. He will be a financial firm out to grab money. Such a firm will aim not at quality or quantity, but at good selling-lines. It will publish a very limited number of books in a year – say, a few for middle-brows and a few more for low-brows – and will strive, by intensive advertising, to sell an immense number of these. There will be no hope for the book which would now be published at a loss because it is good literature; no hope for the unknown genius; no hope even for the book which can make an average profit. A few independent firms will, of course, struggle along on the old lines for a time, but they will go under, just as the literary weeklies have gone under.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An interesting digression might be made here. Some literary weeklies have gone under because they could not get advertisements – a

A sign of the way things are drifting is the uprise of those 'book clubs' (an American invention, significantly enough), which boost the sales of one book extravagantly, leaving others, of equal or greater merit, half swamped in its backwash. These institutions serve no artistic purpose. Quite the contrary; for people ought to choose their own books instead of having them chosen for them by a committee, and art will not be served by making one artist rich at the cost of impoverishing his fellows. They serve the purely financial purpose of giving one quick-selling line a big market. They are paving the way for the future I have predicted.

One more point, relative this time to the literature dealing in new ideas. Says Sir Norman Angell:

'When Swift wrote certain of his pamphlets, he presented a point of view contrary to the accepted one and profoundly affected his country's opinion and policy. [On a financial point too. E. O'D.] Yet at most he circulated a few thousand copies. One of the most important was printed at his own expense. Any printer in a back street could have furnished all the material capital necessary for reaching effectively the whole reading public of the

purely financial device to recover costs irrecoverable in their prices under the present faulty system. Originally advertisements were a supplementary source of revenue; then they became a necessity; now they are virtually a paper's *raison d'être*. Advertisers can dictate not only the policy of a paper, but its literary standards, the penalty for disobedience being annihilation. All this shows once more that under the financial system nothing can endure that cannot 'pay' in a financial sense, no matter how valuable it may be, and no matter how much it may be desired nor how easily it may be produced.



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nation. To-day, for an unfamiliar opinion to gain headway against accepted opinion, the mere mechanical equipment of propaganda would be beyond the resources of any ordinary individual.'

Progress!

This last point brings me to conclusions. My purpose in writing this article has not been merely to air a grievance but to right a wrong. The time is short. Difficult as it is to propagate new ideas to-day, it will soon be almost impossible. Therefore we must act. We have to save art, and we have to save mankind.

What artist has not burned with resentment at the famous couplet (who the Devil wrote it?):

'The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,  
And those that live to please must please to live.'

This is only true so long as the artist is economically dependent on the approval of a miseducated herd. Set him economically free, and the public must take what art he chooses to give it – to the enormous benefit of its own soul.

Artists can save civilization, and only artists can do it. The Scientists have sold the pass long ago. Take any pronouncement by any leading man of Science in recent times and you will see that, contrary to all the principles of Science, they accept and repeat, without dreaming of questioning their validity, all the dogmas of financial economics. Sir James Jeans's recent address to the British Association is an example. Defending Science against

the charge of 'depriving men of employment' (that is, inventing labour-saving appliances) he tacitly accepted the principle that no matter how wealthy the world may be, and how little labour it may consequently require, pay must always depend on work done, and so the only hope he could hold out to the millions of unemployed was that 'Scientific research may ultimately lead' to the creation of new demands requiring the employment of more labour. In other words, the destiny of humanity is to labour at material production for the sake of labouring at more material production, and to go hungry unless it can increase its *needs!* Artists can have no such moral preconceptions as inspired this fatuity, and should be capable of thinking at least a little more clearly. But if they are to save humanity they must make up their minds to understand this financial system which is destroying us, soul and body, and expose in their own ways the fallacies on which it is founded. This is not really difficult, for most of them are obvious to untrained common sense, and all of them are repugnant to every instinct that makes an artist. Take for instance the fundamental one with which I started, that pay can only be awarded in return for work, with its corollary that the provision of work is one of the functions of industry, and the consequent futile attempts of the State to 'provide work'. There is a heap of absurdities here worthy of the satire of a Swift or a Rabelais. What is the sense of 'providing work' when you are busy destroying the products of work already done? Employment is not a substance

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that can be 'provided', nor is it an asset to be desired. It is a process induced by the need to produce goods, the price to be paid for sustenance. Our job is to get the sustenance and distribute it, not to pay more than we can help for it. Take care of the goods, and the work will take care of itself. The function of industry is to produce the maximum return for the minimum exertion. Hence labour-saving appliances. What is the sense of inventing labour-saving appliances with one side of our brain and trying to 'create employment' with the other? Finally, the whole conception springs from the fallacy that work is an end in itself, instead of a means to an end.

Then take that other dogma, that a country's prosperity depends on its exports exceeding its imports – what they call a 'favourable balance of trade.' This means that the way to get rich is to give away more than you receive; and if it were true it would mean that half the countries in the world must always be poor no matter how great their resources, since no country can export more than it imports without some other country doing the opposite. It would mean that if the Canary Isles were destroyed by an earthquake, we should suffer not by the loss of their bananas, but by the loss of a place to send our shirts and saucepans to. If a country were so well endowed by nature as to produce all its requirements within its own borders, it would naturally have no need for foreign trade at all; but according to financial theory it would be miserably poor.

Finally there is the doctrine that

fresh capital development depends on saving – as if next year's factories and libraries could be built out of this year's bread, butter, and boots, and as if there were any sense in hoarding up coins (which are indestructible) and notes (which are replaceable). Besides, even under the present system, it is a lie. Capital development, as I could demonstrate if I pleased, is always financed by new money created by the banks, only part of this being recovered in savings, while the rest is charged into prices. This doctrine has led to the enshrinement of *thrift* among the virtues, and its necessity among the eternal verities – a thing which no artist can observe without disgust, and a prime factor in the ignobility of modern life.

The truth is that the dogmas of finance are mere nonsense to any mind that approaches them without preconceptions and unafraid of 'expert' jargon. Let artists approach them in that spirit. No artist is to be impressed by thieves' Latin; no artist believes in the virtue of toil for toil's sake; and no artist wants the financial system to be a means of coercing people into morality, true or false, to be a means of government, or, indeed, to exercise any function but its proper one of delivering the goods produced by the community as and when the community requires.

It is for artists, then, with the world's eyes and ears in their possession, to speak out; and the miasma that veils the actions of this evil thing and thus gives it its power, will be dissipated. Truth, speaking with the voice of art, will be listened to; falsehood, speaking technical poly-

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syllabic verbiage will be hissed off the stage.

As for the brass tacks, here they are.

(1) Our objective is the economic freedom of the individual, without which intellectual, moral, and personal freedom are impossible. To obtain this we require:

(2) The resumption by the State of the power to issue and control all forms of money;

(3) The equation of purchasing power to productive power; and

(4) The recognition of the fact that machinery is steadily rendering human labour unnecessary, and of the consequent necessity of distributing money without conditions as to work.

This policy is called Social Credit. It is the one thing to-day that is of primary consequence to anyone, whether as man or as artist.

### OVERHEARD

TRAFFIC LIGHT: A little green light that changes to red as your car approaches it.

Belisha Beacon: An orange ball that will not change to green even for the most patient pedestrian.

HERE are a few excuses made by motorists who were involved in accidents.

I misjudged a lady crossing the street.

I collided with a stationary bus proceeding in the opposite direction.

A pedestrian hit me and went under the car.

If the other driver had stopped a few yards behind himself, the accident would not have happened.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS père came home rather late after attending a large party. 'And what was the party like?' asked his son. 'O! terrible, terrible. I should have been frightfully bored if I hadn't been there myself.'

IN America toast-masters allow themselves a greater freedom in introducing speakers than is common in this country. One of them, in calling on a frequent diner-out for his speech, remarked: 'Here is an unusual specimen. You have only to put a dinner in his mouth and out comes a speech.' The victim rose in his place and began: 'Before I go on with my speech, may I be permitted to call your attention to your toast-master. He too is an unusual specimen. You have only to put a speech in his mouth, and out comes your dinner.'

# Out of Leading-Strings

by Nugent Barker

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## THE MIRROR

Mrs. Barrington said to Nurse Taylor one summer morning: 'Oh, Nurse, I thought you and Pollie might like to take the children to Earl's Court Exhibition this afternoon, while I stop at home with the baby.'

Nurse Taylor hesitated, for Mrs. Barrington had never looked after the baby through a whole afternoon; but she soon reflected that in such matters her mistress had a perfect right to do as she pleased; moreover, the baby would certainly be in the way at the Exhibition; and she accepted the proposal without any foolish show of enthusiasm, though Pollie nearly jumped out of her skin with rapture, and the little boy's face blushed with excitement.

On their train journey from Streatham, Nurse Taylor began to describe to the children the wonderful things they were going to see, and she spoke at some length of the Switch-back-railway and the Water Chute; but the middle child took no notice of her nurse at all: there was a fat man sitting on the opposite seat, and she stared at him until his face, which at first had been cheerful and good-natured, grew almost as stolid as her own.

The moment they had pushed through the turnstiles of the Exhibi-

tion, the two nurses clutched at the hands of the children, and the four pleasure-seekers set out along the broad, central avenue, to enjoy themselves amongst the sights and sounds. Pollie was grinning from ear to ear, and the little boy, who had scarcely begun to collect his thoughts, gripped her hand tightly in his excitement; but the middle child, holding Nurse Taylor's hand as limply as possible, took no notice of the showmen who were shouting at the entrances of the side-shows.

Instinct led the nurses to the Ornamental Lake, where flat-bottomed boats, having plunged down the Chute, leaped again and again along the flashing water amidst a cloud of spray.

For some time, Nurse Taylor and Pollie and the two children watched the people enjoying themselves, and listened to the shrieks of fear from the women in the boats; and every time a boat splashed into the water, Nurse Taylor turned to the children and said to them: '*That* was a good one!' – for these two were considered old enough to imagine, and even to appreciate, the thrills of the Water Chute, but too young as yet to experience them in reality. After a while, Nurse Taylor said: 'I really *ought* to have a try'; so she went; and Pollie and the little boy

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kept her in sight for as long as they could, following her tilted straw hat in the sunshine until it became confounded with others. 'There she is! Look! There she goes!' cried Pollie, suddenly pointing. The boat slid down the Chute at a great pace, the splash looked larger than any that had gone before, and when Nurse Taylor came back, Pollie declared that they had heard her screaming above everybody.

Nurse Taylor, feeling that she had been made to look rather silly, asserted that Pollie, too, must really go down the Chute; but the under-nurse refused to do so unless the little boy went with her. 'Nonsense! He's much too young,' cried the head-nurse primly; but she very soon consented, and Pollie and the little boy went down the Chute, screaming at the tops of their voices.

From the Water Chute they hurried to the Switchback-railway, and although Nurse Taylor preferred to look on, Pollie and the little boy enjoyed themselves immensely from start to finish. But when they turned to the middle child, she only shook her head, and they all thought that she was angry because they had not asked her, on account of her youthful age, to go down the Water Chute. And, moreover, seeing her stolid, unresponsive face, they knew that her youth was not the only reason why they had refrained from inviting her to go on the Chute or the Switchback-railway: they knew that they felt shy and ill at ease beside her, and had been shocked into silence because of her unsociability. She guessed their thoughts, for she was by far the most self-conscious, the

subtlest, and in many ways the cleverest, of all the Barringtons; so that when Nurse Taylor snapped at her: 'Why don't you laugh, child? Others are laughing,' she was swept at once by a secret anger, her throat grew stiff, and her fingers dug into the palms of her hands. She wouldn't! She wouldn't! She wouldn't laugh! Why did they want her to laugh? She frowned at her brother, stared at his thin, satisfied face . . . listened for a moment, breathlessly, to the sounds of the Exhibition. . . . And she knew now that she had always felt and behaved like this when other people were enjoying themselves.

As she and her brother and the two nurses went from one amusement to another in the sunny grounds of the Exhibition, the feeling grew stronger, the feeling of antagonism against those who were out for enjoyment, who shared pleasure like sheep. The very heat of the sun and the glare of the white palaces annoyed her and encouraged this feeling; distant colours danced in front of her eyes. 'The Magic Maze!' cried Pollie, pointing eagerly, 'The Magic Maze!' It was a series of wooden-walled, snake-like passages, lit by a roof of glass; and here, amid the echoing laughter of strangers and of her own kith and kin, the middle child succeeded in losing herself. Her clenched hands, sturdy body, and plump and freckled face were very still as she strove to revolve ideas in her mind, while in that welcome solitude she heard the head-nurse calling: 'Where has she got to? Where is the child?' She was quite unable to put her feelings into words: she could only be aware of them; and

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by this time she had begun to feel an enmity not merely against people, but also against the actual amusements of the Exhibition – she was being bombarded by them, played upon by everything that *moved*: by the Water Chute, the Switchback-railway, and the Mazes – yes, even this Maze was moving, subtly entwining itself about her, humiliating her, crushing her with its snaky walls. Well. She would have to let her body respond; but never her face. That could be always under her control. If they insisted that she should go on the Switchback and in Mazes, she would obey them . . . but her face would never alter its expression, no one must ever look for a smile on her face. For she had known, occasionally, how foolish it was to allow one's face to respond, to slip out of control – grown-up people took advantage of one then, and one became their tool.

As soon as the pleasure party was out in the sunshine again, Nurse Taylor renewed her authority by demanding loudly: 'Are we all here?' and, without looking at the middle child, she began to lead the way, though nobody knew where it led to. 'Haw haw! Haw haw!' Pollie kept on laughing to herself, stumping along, thinking of the Magic Maze and of how she had never succeeded in reaching the centre. There were so many side-shows to be seen, and the choice was so difficult, that Nurse Taylor could not make up her mind for ages; and when the little boy realized that the afternoon was slipping away, he remembered how Pollie, a year ago, had made them laugh by pretending to walk like a horse, and he wondered

whether she would do it again for them when they reached home.

At last they came to the Hall of Distorting Mirrors. Pollie cried out at once that they must certainly go into it; and Nurse Taylor, making a joke, said: 'Surely your face is ugly enough already, girl?'

How she and Pollie laughed at that! And what laughter there was in front of the mirrors! 'Oh, oh, oh-h-h!' cried Pollie, 'look at me! Come and hold my hand,' she called to the little boy, 'and let's stand together!' Nurse Taylor passed very quickly from mirror to mirror, in case some stranger should catch sight of the ridiculous figure that she cut in the distorted glass. But the middle child stared ahead. She was afraid to look into the mirrors. Yes, now she was caught. The mirrors did not *move* – not even as the Maze had moved. It was she who must move . . . and the mirrors were calling her. How could she stare any longer, and not look into the mirrors?

And very quietly, very helplessly, she looked into a mirror. The ridiculous, distorted face in the mirror was crying, but it was crying with laughter: she moved, and now it was crying with horror: she moved again, and it was crying with derision, sarcastically crying; her face, that was always so stolid, was moving in the mirror, shaping through all the emotions of the human soul.

While she was looking into the mirror, she heard Pollie's footsteps behind her. Clop, clop, clop, clop. Whipped into sudden action, she faced her under-nurse.

"Why, Girlie, what are you crying

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for?' It was a stupid name, 'Girlie,' a babyish name, but Pollie had often called her that, and now, for some strange reason, the little girl liked it.

### THE FENCE

Of course Nurse Taylor and Pollie, the under-nurse, were not really Barringtons, but Mrs. Barrington considered that anyone living for a long time in her house, whether guest or servant, became almost a Barrington, and should be treated as quite a Barrington. Nurse Taylor knew this, and agreed to it, yet was inclined to resent it, for it classed her at once with Pollie and the other servants.

One afternoon, she and the three children were hurrying along a suburban avenue beneath the shade of the trees. They were on their way to listen to a band playing on a common; but the sun and the leaves threw so many shadows everywhere that the little boy thought he would never reach the end of the journey.

The youngest child was riding in the dark-green perambulator, and her brother and her sister were walking on either side of their tall nurse. Presently the avenue turned to the left, but still there was neither sight of the common nor sound of the band; the hot sun filtered through the trees, and the distance in front looked as far as the distance behind.

'Are you sure she didn't tell you what it was?' inquired Nurse Taylor thoughtfully. The little boy shook his head, and gazed into the distance.

'Won't even open his mouth to-day,' thought Nurse Taylor. 'He's in one of his moods.'

'She didn't tell me either,' said

the middle child suddenly and quite loudly. This was true. She had *seen* it for herself; and although the middle child told lies whenever the occasion suited her, she found it convenient now to tell the truth. 'Such a lovely present . . . such a *beautiful* present,' she whispered. The little boy nodded his head several times in succession, very emphatically.

'I wonder what it can be?' Nurse Taylor murmured, breaking into unaccustomed softness. And she tried to picture the present that Mrs. Barrington had in store for her. The colour rose into her pale cheeks, and her thin, handsome face stared up the avenue of trees. Pollie was away at her mother's; Nurse Taylor's hands were full to-day, but her head was fuller. What could her present be? It was sure to be something good, expensive . . . a reward for 'honesty' . . . for 'faithful services.' She frowned a little, for she did not class herself with those who are known as 'honest' and 'faithful.' She was a superior nurse in more ways than one, a lady's nurse; yet even that scarcely described what she really was. . . .

She had a life of her own. She had admirers - several of them. She received more letters than anyone else in the house, excepting Mrs. Barrington. Pollie hardly ever heard from a soul.

There was a great deal in common between herself and Mrs. Barrington, she thought. For example: each of them knew her proper place, and kept to it. Mrs. Barrington seldom interfered with the nursery: whenever she did so, Nurse Taylor admitted afterwards - sometimes to herself, always

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to Mrs. Barrington, but never to the other servants – that her mistress was justified. It was this honesty that gave her a kind of secret fellowship with Mrs. Barrington, for it showed quite clearly how faithful she was, it showed that she had the welfare of the children at heart; and for this reason she knew that the present was certain to be a good one, a little piece of jewellery, a buckle, a brooch, a bangle hung with tiny enamelled objects, such as Mrs. Barrington wore. . . . 'I *expect* she told you not to tell me, dear!' Nurse Taylor suggested. But still the little boy would not open his mouth in reply, and the middle child stared into the distance. So the nurse continued to think her thoughts amid the shifting lights of the avenue.

She heard the rattle of cart-wheels behind her, and a smart young butcher, dressed in blue, came and was gone in a burst of trotting and whistling. That, she knew, was Pollie's one and only lover; and, gazing into the chequered depths of the avenue that had swallowed the shining butcher's cart, she thought of the postmen and policemen who wanted to marry the head-nurse of the Barringtons.

Beside her ran a wooden wall, or fence, common to suburban neighbourhoods; its high, perpendicular strips of wood were overlapping towards her, and as she walked along with the children, and her steps grew slower, she could see between the spaces, and could catch glimpses of the gardens beyond. There were flashes of white roses, and streaks of sunny lawns.

'When I come to marry,' she

thought, 'I shall be very successful, and quite happy. Mrs. Barrington is sure to give me a handsome wedding-present, such as a leather dressing-case with my initials on everything . . . and I shall have a garden with striped deck-chairs under the trees. . . .'

Her handsome face drooped a little over the perambulator. 'Yes, dear?' she murmured. The youngest child had lost her doll; and without thinking, Nurse Taylor extracted it gently from its hiding-place.

But the middle child could contain herself no longer.

'If you *want* to know what the present is, I'll tell you,' she whispered.

'Look, Nannie, quick!' cried the little boy, baring his teeth.

'When we get home,' said the middle child, 'Mummie will give it to you.'

'Give me *what*?' Nurse Taylor almost screamed.

'My tooth,' said the little boy, pointing to the dark gap.

'The first *Barrington* tooth,' the middle child murmured, dropping her eyes.

Nurse Taylor turned the perambulator, shaking the child within it, and a deep flush swept into her cheeks. 'We're going home now,' she said.

'But, Nannie, we haven't *been* anywhere!'

Not been anywhere? *She* had. She had been a long way, farther than she had ever been before. She was truly insulted by what she had heard. She would give notice at once. Or had she no prospects in view, and must she live for ever with the Barringtons? She would accept the tooth; she would even pretend that she was honoured



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by it; and as soon as she had reached her bedroom, she would throw the tooth under the wash-hand-stand, and never look for it again. . . .

The high, perpendicular strips of the wooden wall beside her were now closed against her, overlapping away from her, and she could see no longer into the gardens.

### REVOLUTION

One day Pollie electrified the Barringtons by announcing that she had a young brother named Willie, and that he was ill in the hospital; and as soon as they had succeeded in readjusting their idea of their under-nurse, the Barringtons told Pollie how pleased they all were to know that she had a young brother, and how sorry they were to hear that he was ill in the hospital. Then they all began to feel rather awed and excited about his accident, for, as Nurse Taylor explained one morning at breakfast in the nursery, no doubt Willie would have to have both his feet amputated.

News of the projected operation soon reached Mrs. Barrington, who said regretfully in her soft voice, nodding her small, dark head at her under-nurse: 'And I am sure *he* would have needed his feet a *lot*, Pollie.' Pollie burst into tears; and as though the doctors had heard the conversation of the Barringtons at Streatham, Willie did have both his feet amputated. There was a hard frost in London on the day that Pollie and her mother went to see him in hospital. Pollie's mother looked pale and thin, sitting near the door of the Hammersmith bus; her gloved hands lay like wood in her lap; she was dressed very neatly

in black, and appeared as though she were going to a funeral. But the little under-nurse's cheeks were as red as apples, and the breath was puffing out of her mouth like steam from a kettle. While the horses were whacking their feet loudly on the frosty road, and the conductor was punching the passengers' tickets, Pollie began to think more clearly than ever about her brother's operation. She imagined the gleaming of knives, the rasping of saws, the faces of the doctors bent low down over the body; and presently she shut her eyes tightly, and wondered whether Willie had felt anything. She wanted to go back at once to the Barringtons, to talk and laugh with the children in the nursery.

'Here we are!' said Pollie's mother suddenly, pointing to a large building on the other side of the road; she had been to the hospital several times before, and now felt almost as at home there as though she were a patient herself. Over the hall and endless stone corridors there hung a pleasant, peculiar smell that frightened Pollie at first and made her feel sick, but after a time she did not notice it. Nurses hurried past her and she smiled at them, and she stared at the doctors in their white slops.

They found their Willie lying back in his bed in the children's ward; he was as quiet as a mouse, but from one of the other beds there arose a continual wailing. 'Dearie, dearie!' whispered Willie's mother, staring into a distant corner; 'tch, tch!'; then, rubbing her stiff hands on her knees, and nodding her jet-trimmed bonnet, she said repeatedly to her son: 'Well, lovey, we'll soon have *you* home again,

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I'm sure!' Her voice was suddenly so loud and cheerful that Willie thought he was going to die. And immediately after she had spoken to him, Willie's mother would turn her head and smile at her daughter, whose face beside Willie's looked as red and as shining as a tomato. So an hour went, while Pollie kept on grinning at her mother, showing her large teeth and glistening gums. But Willie's feet were hurting him the whole time, although they were not there.

And presently, on her way home, Pollie began to think of her own feet. She thought what a terrible thing it would be if she, too, were to have an accident, and if both of her feet were to be amputated, and the doctors and the pretty nurses were to see what black feet she had. 'Oh, oh, they must be quite black by now!' thought Pollie. She wriggled her toes, and both her feet felt as heavy as lead; she feared she would never reach home. And when at last she was home again, she hardly liked to walk across the nursery floor because of the black feet in her boots. 'How's Willie?' the Barringtons cried. 'How did he look? Does he miss them much?' they wanted to know. But all that she could do was to say 'ever so,' or just 'yes,' or 'no, Master John,' or 'not so bad, I think,' to these eager questions, for she felt quite excited, and had forgotten her brother's feet in thinking of her own.

The little boy John slept in a room with Pollie; and that night, when he was fast asleep, and there was no one to hear her or watch her, Pollie looked at her feet by candle-light. Yes, there they were, both of them, just as

black as could be – especially the tops of the toes, and the backs of the heels, and across the arch where the insteps and the ankles joined. She hid them at once in the shadows beside her bed; then she pulled them up again on to the eiderdown, wetted her handkerchief with her tongue, and discovered that she was able to make a good impression on her toes and insteps. Encouraged, she filled a basin with cold water, taking great care not to awaken the child; after that, she pulled up her nightdress, clipping it tightly between her fat knees; and with soap and a sponge, she washed her feet until they were perfectly clean.

In the morning she hardly ever stopped talking about Willie and his feet. 'Willie,' she said, 'poor Willie! Mother hoped he'd be a Messenger Boy.' In the evening, when Mrs. Barrington, wrapped in her smart cloak, had gone off to the theatre, Pollie undressed and had a bath all over. For the first time since she had been with the Barringtons, she got into the bath properly. Now she sank like a porpoise, with only her head remaining above the hot water; now her plump body, standing up in the steam, grew shiny with soap from neck to knees; she held the sponge above her head, and in her exuberance she sang loudly, tossing the wet, dark hair out of her eyes, her famous nonsense song that the children loved:

'Coymi nairo,  
Kilda care-o,  
Coymi nairo, coymi;  
Pim strimma strammadiddle  
Larrabona ring timma,  
Rig nam bullytimma coymi!'

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From that time onwards, Pollie took a bath whenever she could; and she went about singing her nonsense song so often that everybody grew tired of it; and when Willie was home again, and she went to see him and her mother, she used to delight in carrying him about the room, for the sheer pleasure of feeling him in her arms; and as she walked, she would sometimes catch her feet on purpose in the rather ragged carpet, and pretend to be on the verge of stumbling, so that he should not feel embarrassed, nor herself 'superior.'

### THE DOLL

The youngest child had been put to bed for the night, though the sky still glowed with the March sunset, and people were still hurrying home from their work. The youngest child lay awake, and had lost her doll; but many of the people in the streets had lost their parcels, or their buses, or their heads, or themselves, or their reputations, while others had lost a mint of money and hadn't the heart to open their newspapers.

On certain occasions, such as this evening, when the unintelligible shouts of the newsvendors sped down the street, Cook would waddle up the area steps, hugging her elbows, for she like to have a paper of her own to read in her bedroom; and should it contain a love-serial, the kitchen-maid was at once jubilant, and walked on her toes with excitement, for she thought there was nothing so urgent as love.

'A Young Woman Shot.'

'Eh, the pore soul!' whispered the fat cook, rustling her paper in the

kitchen. These were Victorian days, when families had a whole house to themselves, and a staff of servants in the Servants' Hall.

'— At ten minutes past seven last evening a report of firearms was heard in Cross Keys-square —'

Cook ran her greasy finger down the column, and sighed, for the news must wait. There was so much to be done in a hurry, what with Mrs. Barrington going to *The Shop Girl* at the Gaiety Theatre, and dinner being early. An ox-tail simmered in a stewpan, a smell of savoury herbs hung in the air; and upstairs in her bed the youngest child lay fretting and tossing because she had lost her doll.

The gentle sound travelled as far as the day-nursery, but nobody heard it. Nurse Taylor was interrupting the whirring of her sewing-machine at frequent intervals, in order to read out aloud, from an evening paper that Mrs. Barrington had sent up to her, the important account of the Palfrey wedding; while Pollie, the under-nurse, was ironing, planking down the iron now and again with a soft thud on to its metal stand. The paper rustled, and the elder woman read out in her clear, significant voice: '“Extra police had to be drafted to hold back the crowd.” But I'm not at all surprised,' she murmured thoughtfully, gazing towards the window; the light over the Streatham roofs was dying, and the chimneys were losing the sharpness of their silhouettes against the sky. 'Well, I suppose it's all over by now. Light the light, Pollie, and draw the curtains. We can hardly see beyond our noses.'

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Fish-tail flames popped up at both ends of the mantelpiece, gay light flooded the room. Nurse Taylor had intended to read to herself the full account of the Palfrey wedding; but now, sitting in an easy chair, the nurse caught sight of a greater, more pregnant item of news, and started at once on the Cardew Divorce Case, smiling at the quips of Justice Bingham. 'Well I ne-ver. Fancy that, now,' she murmured, tapping her nail on the paper, and looking at Pollie from the corner of her narrow eye. The clock ticked; the cuckoo came out, and bowed seven times to the two women, while the churches echoed him with their multifarious voices; the lamp-lighter entered the dying street, and the youngest child fretted and grieved in her bed because she had lost her doll.

After a time, one of the gas-brackets was seen to be smoking fiercely; the glass globe surrounding the flame was blackened with soot; as soon as Pollie had adjusted it, she went over to Nurse Taylor, and, leaning her arm on the back of the chair, began to read out, in her loud young country voice, a draper's advertisement that had caught her eye:

' "COSTUMES, CAPES, and JACKETS for Spring Wear."

' "THE NEW EMBROIDERED CAPES, in every shade of cloth."

' "Young ladies' BLACK CLOTH JACKETS."'

Her eye shifted, and she read from the opposite page:

' "Murder at Ipswich Barracks. - Quartermaster-sergeant Parkin was murdered yesterday at the Ipswich Militia Barracks. Parkin was with a man named Walsh, a sergeant-instructor . . . when Walsh took down a carbine . . ."

'Soldiers, you see,' said Nurse Taylor, rather mincingly. 'I expect it was over a girl.'

'I sometimes wish I wasn't a girl,' whispered Pollie, staring across the room.

A policeman sauntered down the street, pointing his lantern into the areas and on to the doorsteps, and articulating, with the beat of his heel and toe: 'Law . . . and Order . . . Law . . . and Order.'

The town hummed; the noise was everywhere, and nobody heard it; but the shrill, intermittent blowing of a cab-whistle, irresolute on the wind, yet promising to endure for evermore, filled the night-nursery faintly and sweetly with sound.

A sigh of contentment passed through the lips of the little girl. All was happy now, everything was clear and the road made ready for sleep. She folded her arms carefully, and her thoughts went out of her, for she had found her doll.

# The Doss-house

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WHEN dusk is falling and the streets become slowly deserted, huddled figures flee from the approaching night and seek the warmth and companionship of the doss-house.

There is a long row of houses such as these in Body Street; once they were the homes of wealthy shipowners; they are now falling into slow decay, broken windows stuffed with dirty rags and torn yellow, faded curtains that shift in the breeze: the yawning black doorway reached by steps of broken sandstone sucks inside it all sorts of broken-spirited men.

A house serves as the outward expression of its occupants; and the doss-house has a look of its own. It has a melancholy exterior and frowns gloomily even when the sun is shining: at night it has a forlorn aspect and seems plunged in sorrow. The doss-house is the final refuge of despair: the next milestone is the workhouse.

The charge for admission is sixpence a night: for a week the price is slightly reduced. The aristocrats pay ninepence a night for a bed and talk as if they owned the earth. This extra threepence is a touch of extravagance that makes a man appear reckless when his trousers are torn to shreds, and his coat is miraculously held together over his shoulder by pieces of string. If a man cannot afford sixpence, he is regarded as a very low person, and the workhouse is considered the best place

for him. There is a certain amount of dignity in being able to patronise a doss-house, and a miserly sixpence is a token of respectability. And there is not the slightest doubt that those who go there, notwithstanding their untidy appearance, are perfectly conscious of their position in society, and even the knowledge that the workhouse will be their ultimate destination does not rob them of the pride in possessing a well-worn sixpence which is the key opening to them dreams of a better and happier world. How this has been got does not concern anybody, although, like the prosperous business-man, he might be tempted to quote Smiles' 'Self Help' on the assumption that all wealth is the result of honest toil.

Sleeping out is not popular, and it is rather annoying to be awakened from a most agreeable slumber by a policeman and brought before the court next morning charged with being a vagabond. A vagabond! How utterly degrading! But there are many advantages in sleeping on a bed even if it is a very uncomfortable one, and it is pleasant to boast that, even if one has not had a good meal for weeks, one has slept in a bed of some description instead of lying under a hedge in the park or down at the docks. The benefits of civilization still exercise an enervating influence on the staunchest heart, and the greatest tramp philosopher might be induced to state a

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preference for bed despite an empty stomach and a hole in his socks that is past mending.

Alf is in charge of this place, and combines the functions of a cashier and a chucker-out, possessing an oily apologetic smile which he is able to summon for the performance of both these tasks. He has a round fat face, and there are always a few beads of perspiration on the tip of his podgy nose. His strength is enormous, and he walks about the building in his waistcoat with his shirt-sleeves rolled up surveying his own little world with a confident stare.

Alf's knowledge of doss-house society is considerable, but it is treated with the greatest contempt. He spends the greater part of his time reading the adventures of Buffalo Bill, and he does not despise penny novelettes so long as they are far enough removed from the world in which he is compelled to seek a livelihood.

The cupboard behind his desk is packed full of cheap books, and he guards them jealously, fearful that somebody might come and steal them. His interest does not extend beyond this, and he is quite contented with his lot, if one can judge from the severe expression on his features, with a penny novelette sticking out of his trousers' pocket and his whole person smelling of stale tobacco. Alf lives in a world of his own and rarely comes out of it to take a deep breath of fresh air. He will not discuss religion, politics or women with the young men, nor will he display the cynicism that the old men expect from him, and when called upon to answer a question, replies in monosyllables. As over the past of most of the inhabitants of the doss-

house, a discreet veil is drawn over his past life and he lives for the moment: the future is meaningless to him for he hopes to-morrow will be no different from to-day.

The large room on the first floor, placed at the disposal of the down-and-outs, is used for a variety of purposes, including cooking and eating, as well as reading; and it is always crowded in the evening, especially when the nights draw in. There is often a feeble fire burning in the grate, which reminds them of home and brings back memories of prosperous days that are now no more. When the room is crowded the atmosphere becomes suffocatingly close so that they feel more comfortable in their miserable rags, which offer little protection from the cutting wind off the river outside.

If it is very cold the down-and-outs gather round the fire flickering in the grate; they rub their hands together and stamp their feet - a tightly wedged mass quarrelling, pushing and swearing at one another.

The ceiling, blackened with soot, hangs low, and the walls are broken in places: the wallpaper is rent and pieces of plaster have been knocked out. The pattern of the wallpaper has disappeared long ago, although sometimes faded blooms are distinguishable from the grease and dirt, lurking shadows of the dead past. The furniture does not exist except for a few broken chairs and a couple of tables that totter on their legs like old men.

But the poverty of the room is not noticed by its occupants, unused to material comforts of any kind, who regard their situation, a resigned expression on their faces, gazing before

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them with a glazed look in their eyes.

Cooking is accompanied by much good-tempered abuse from those who have already dined or who are not in a position to buy anything to dine on, and it is difficult to control a frying-pan in danger of falling into the ash-pan with its contents when there is a crowd of men pressed closely together in a circle, seeking the warmth.

Miracles can be performed with a communal frying-pan, although this is a luxury nowadays; and it is easy to make dripping toast if there is fat enough. There are many extraordinary things that can be done with a frying-pan provided somebody has money to burn: one can cook a sort of jam concoction when gooseberries are dirt cheap, or potato pies with modifications and other dainties; but these cannot be described as they have no fixed form nor fixed smell either. They are usually the result of a momentary inspiration, and it is often difficult to achieve the same result on another occasion. These experiments are watched with considerable interest, and there is much imitation, although as a rule, the average down-and-out prefers egg and fried bread if he chances to become suddenly rich because it is straightforward. Excessive wealth is got rid of by the simple means of a journey to the chip shop to purchase a threepenny fish and twopennyworth of chips.

Most of the men are strangers to soap and water, and as they dry their clothes before the fire when caught by the rain and soaked to the skin, the atmosphere of the room becomes unbearable even to these gentlemen of leisure; and smoking is a necessary

indulgence in order to make things less disagreeable. The tobacco used is of a mixed variety, but comes from the one source. There are those who specialize in collecting fag-ends from the gutters, walking along with a far-away look in their eyes; when the day is over the 'bag' is quite substantial. They usually sit at the table with a small pile of tobacco on a piece of dirty newspaper, selling portions of it and looking very businesslike, as if their position was one of great responsibility.

When the weather is not so cold, or at least when Alf thinks a fire is superfluous, they spread out, and some try to read a newspaper weeks old, whilst others engage in lively conversation. These discussions are rarely intellectual, referring, more often than not, to racehorses that never come in first, although considered absolute certainties before the race was run; or to money expected from distant relatives who are always on the point of death but reluctant to take the fatal plunge.

A game of cards is sometimes popular, but this can be expensive with money so scarce, and there is so much cheating that the best of friends fall out, rolling on the floor together and tearing one another's hair out: the barber is unknown to most of them and there are few bald men in the doss-house. Even if the stakes are halfpennies, if there's a cardsharp cleverer than the others at play the losses mount up until the limit is reached. The lucky one becomes an object of suspicion, and an excuse is soon found to begin a quarrel with him. Blows are exchanged, halfpennies roll about the floor, and blood is spilt. There is a notice in the passage outside that gambling is strictly prohi-

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bited, and Alf tries to enforce it: a dispute is the likely outcome of a game of cards between two crooks, and the row tends to lower the tone of the establishment.

On the other hand chess and draughts are encouraged. There are two draught boards, and during the summer months there is always a crowd of men gathered round the tables watching others at play, and waiting patiently for their turn to come round. There is nothing more flattering than to sit facing Robert, the acknowledged doss-house draughts champion, and receive words of encouragement from those gathered around. Robert is like a barrel and sits on an orange-box with a quiet, tranquil expression on his face, defeating man after man with extraordinary ease: yells of discouragement never disturb his complacency. Only once was Robert defeated – when he drank more than was good for him, rolling off the orange-box and almost falling through the rotten floor. His rival said it was the shock of defeat but the majority of the residents were inclined to the opinion that Robert was drunk and his brain was completely fuddled.

Wearing clothes is more a matter of form than anything else: their rags afford them little protection from the weather and do not help to improve an appearance that is already thin and emaciated. Lacking the barest necessities of life, it is a wonder they can stand on their feet. Khaki wears well and is still commonly met with: khaki tunics with the buttons ripped off, the trousers with frayed bottoms indicative of the wear and tear of time; and the cardigan is still a possession that is

highly prized if it has not already passed into the hands of the pawnbroker in a fit of forgetfulness.

Their attire is of the simplest; a shirt, a pair of trousers, and heavy boots. If he is feeling in a good humour a man might have a shave, although as a rule he prefers to look like a respected member of the Victorian aristocracy. A pair of boots can always be obtained from the Public Assistance Committee if he threatens to go into the workhouse, so there is no need to be afraid of wet feet. That is a thing of the past. Other articles of attire can be obtained from the P.A.C.; but the down-and-out cannot be bothered. He doesn't mind the money, but wearing clothes of any sort is a bit of a nuisance, especially as it is his last wish to appear nice, clean and respectable like other people, preferring to drift round the world with a hole in his trousers and a piece of shirt coming through it and an ancient 'bowler' perched on his head free from the petty tyranny of his fellow-men and responsible to nobody but himself.

When the weather is warm it is an extraordinary sight to see some of them walking along the street wearing straw hats with a desperate nonchalance and a flower in the buttonhole, and the question is asked how these articles come into their possession. There is the same petty vanity in the man who buys a pair of yellow socks at Woolworth's at sixpence apiece, and tightens up his braces in order to expose them to the fullest advantage. Such behaviour might suggest a man's brain was affected, but in reality the down-and-out is no more conceited than his fellow-men: the contrast in the attire he



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wears attracts more attention than it normally would do. There are those who make a habit of turning out early in the morning and rush to town in order to examine the dust-bins before the men come round to empty them; and if a new tie or collar is seen on one of them in company with a ragged coat, or if a man's hair is thick with grease smelling of brilliantine on a stocking-less tramp, it is very likely the decorations have been dug out from the refuse in the dust-bin.

A miser in the doss-house is an exception, although there is an old gentleman wearing a green swallow-tailed coat and striped trousers with a pair of shoes almost like cardboard who presents himself every Tuesday morning at the P.A.C. for relief, walking away at his usual tottering gait to the end of the street and entering the palatial premises of the district bank to deposit it there: when he dies somebody else will spend his savings for him.

But this is very rare. A man descends to the doss-house level simply because he does not appreciate the value of money, and the receipt of a hundred pounds, for instance, by one of them would probably be the signal for much rejoicing, with drinking and gambling and other expenses thrown in in order to rid himself of the embarrassing load of wealth that oppresses him. For him a few shillings rattling in his pocket can be a source of acute discomfort until, in a fit of desperation, it is spent on some frivolous thing, only for the spender to realize later that a good meal would be worth having if there was money enough for it.

The possession of an unquenchable thirst does not explain the fall of most

of them: a man can be a drunkard as well as a gambler without spending his days in the vicinity of the doss-house. The down-and-out has no money to indulge in these vices, although if an opportunity comes his way there is no doubt he will outdo all the others. There is nobody free from a vice of some kind, so that the down-and-out is not to be condemned for a fondness for these things.

It is his genuine dislike to hard work of any kind which makes him an object of detestation by employers of labour. Probably he is politically educated and when offered a job feels it is provided only so long as the employer can make a profit out of him, and this consciousness of exploitation gives him an inferiority complex so far as work is concerned.

Then there is the man sent to prison for several months by a vindictive magistrate. Once sent to prison, he comes out an outcast of society, and the fight to re-assert himself in the good opinion of his fellow-men is a hopeless one: as a matter of course he descends to the doss-house level.

If the down-and-out be a single man thrown out of work with no prospect of fresh employment, it is no wonder he grows, in time, indifferent, content to receive twelve shillings from the parish and barely exist.

Many explanations can be offered for the circumstances that have dragged these men to the bottom of the ladder, and much sympathy is offered by kindly disposed persons without anything being done to ameliorate their lot. The fact is they are the cast-offs of the present competitive system, which is both stupid and wasteful. It

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is just as wrong to pay a man twelve shillings for doing nothing as to persecute another when he rebels against the laws of society administered by incompetent magistrates.

There is one type, however, who will probably require forceful persuasion before doing any work. He is not lazy, but his intellectual gifts have never been properly developed to be used in the communal interest. The doss-house philosopher regards work as a disagreeable necessity. It is his fondness for indulging in profound introspection that arouses indignation in the breasts of those who never think much about anything. He is aptly described as the aristocrat of the working-class for it is his habit to brood over the deeper truths of life which bewilder the average man and woman seeking in a humble way some 'proletarian' philosophy that will help to make life more agreeable than it is at present.

There are numerous outstanding personalities in the doss-house for they all possess a peculiar uniqueness: this wealth of character is so considerable and diverse that it is difficult to take anyone from the rest and regard him as representing the typical down-and-out.

Poverty breeds desperation, and in the struggle to exist something savage and uncouth is present in men's demeanour. The veneer of civilization disappears, and in its place there is displayed with crude emphasis the virtues and vices of starving men, qualities both arresting and depressing to look at. Weary of the company of social climbers there is something stimulating in the company of these men stripped of vulgar pretence and

shorn of all sham and hypocrisy. Allied with open bestiality there is a certain eccentricity of behaviour. Men cease to imitate one another, following their own inclinations and developing them to an extraordinary extent which takes an exaggerated form that strikes a member of the bourgeoisie as being both amusing and pitiful.

It is scarcely credible, but the most awful snob in the world resides in the doss-house, and punctually at six o'clock every night in the week is seen to take a stroll dressed in the supposed height of fashion, swinging his cane and walking with a solemn dignity that would suggest a gentleman of dignity with plenty of money to spend. The clothes he wears are a little threadbare, but they are the real thing. A top-hat, a swallow-tailed coat, trousers and spats, and even a boiled shirt form his wardrobe, and he guards them with jealous care. The top-hat is disappointing, being badly dinged, and there are big blobs of grease on his coat-tails which he has forgotten to remove; but the spats help to make up for these defects, for the spats possess a virgin whiteness in contrast to the dirty streets he passes through during the course of the evening. His life is a solitary one, cleaning his battered top-hat or carefully sewing his threadbare trousers together in preparation for the evening's peregrination. He considers himself a very superior person; but there is an old-fashioned courtesy about him which makes his attitude less irritating.

When jokes are made at his expense he never flies into a temper, content to regard his tormenter with a compassionate eye as if profoundly

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sorry for him. His conversation is indifferent: he does not speak well. It has been said that Mr. O'Donnel was once a dock labourer; but he has been convinced of his aristocratic pedigree for many years now and acts the part to the best of his ability. His hair is grey; he still maintains a dignified bearing that arouses admiration, and in the street people are so impressed that they forget to laugh at the wretched clothes he wears, feeling awed in the presence of a gentleman who has fallen on bad times. He returns promptly at ten o'clock and Alf starts muttering; 'it must be nearly bed-time!'

The religious fanatic is fortunately rare, although the subject of religion rivals the women in popularity. There was a stout little man who spent the day walking the streets with a placard fixed on his back announcing in big letters: BE SAVED OR GO TO HELL. In the end he had to be put in a mental home: the salvation of men worried him so much that he was in constant conflict with those inclined to disregard his message and nearly murdered one man in order, so he said, to save his soul from the 'burning brand.'

There are several diligent bible students: old men approaching the end who find comfort in reading what at one time they affected to despise. They never attend church, nor will they be induced to discuss the life beyond with their fellow down-and-outs. Moreover, they will not allow themselves to be disturbed in these devotions by the jeers of the rationalists who dogmatize worse than anybody else.

There is a tall thin man with a broken nose wearing rubber soles on his boots; he suffers from bad feet and

has a habit of walking with his hands behind his back and his head inclined forward. His pockets are full of religious tracts, and he brings them out with the gesture of a conjurer and thrusts them under one's nose: customers are hard to find so that they are usually given away. He holds a meeting in the square on a Sunday evening, leading the singing in a quavering tenor voice when his colleague fails to arrive with the harmonium; but the collection is never very good even on a fine summer evening: the congregation consists mostly of communists, who regard his behaviour with profound astonishment. Whenever somebody is taken ill, Price is always at hand ready to offer his services. If the ailing man does not want to hear about his soul waiting salvation Price will obligingly defer the matter until a more fitting occasion. There is no doubt that his conversation can be stimulating, for he has suffered much and has sufficient tact to realize that religion can be a very tiresome subject, although it is his greatest wish that all the down-and-outs will one day be converted and become good Christians.

There was Sam who played the flute outside in the street, but he has since passed away and the shrill piping sounds that came from the instrument he loved so well are heard no more. Sam's repertoire consisted of four tunes which he had the power to vary to an infinite degree so that nothing ever played by Sam sounded exactly the same, although he insisted that four tunes were his limit. People took pity on him, and his income was fairly regular until something happened to

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his flute, and it is said that he died of a broken heart. The piercing notes from Sam's flute were carried a long distance on the balmy spring air, and the down-and-outs sitting on the steps of the doss-house would nudge one another and give a wink, remarking that 'our canary is chirping again.'

Robert was too proud to accept charity of any kind, and eked a bare subsistence selling bootlaces, buttons and thread, walking round the suburbs and calling from door to door. He did a fair business: his talk was fluent and he behaved like a perfect gentleman when doors were banged in his face, raising his hat and walking down the garden path like a landlord with the rent in his pocket. The others were inclined to despise him, and his life was made unbearable until he was taken suddenly ill, when everybody was anxious to do something for him.

A down-and-out has no difficulty in falling asleep, and is eager to take a nap whenever the opportunity offers itself, and the payment of sixpence for a bed in a doss-house is an expenditure that must justify itself, so that as soon as his head touches the pillow the world and its woes cease to concern him in the pleasures of utter forgetfulness.

O'Calligan talks in his sleep: his voice is never loud and the others are too tired to take any notice of him. In slumber, thoughts come to the surface finding expression which in the day-time are suppressed. These are the deepest longings of a lonely old man: he talks endlessly in his pleasant brogue about his home in Ireland and the 'mists going up and the mists going down' and 'the peewits crying out over

the black lakes and the larks and the big thrushes when the days are warm' with a gentle earnestness as if there was nothing more desirable in the whole world than to be back in Ireland again. His talk is a hopeless jumble jumping from one subject to another with remarkable ease: the quavering voice goes on unceasing through the night to die away with the first flush of dawn. It is said O'Calligan was an actor at one time; but now he is a drunken sot and will do anything to satisfy his thirst for liquor.

One night he was in obvious pain: his voice was highly pitched and querulous and his companions were suddenly awakened by his groans. The bare idea that a fraction of their sixpence should be wasted by this unseemly interruption was sufficient to rouse them to a pitch of great excitement, and in their partially stupefied condition they were reluctant to do anything for him. O'Calligan could wait till the morning when there was plenty of time available to attend to him. They were inclined to be indignant: O'Calligan was always very generous when he succeeded in pinching anything and they could not forget that; but there was a limit to their patience when he showed no readiness to cease his loud chattering.

Somebody flung a boot at him which caught him on the head. His voice was silent for a time. When he began again he spoke very quietly, and the others did not hear him. This time he did not talk so much about his beloved Ireland: he was partially conscious and his mind seemed tied down to the cares of the world around him. Consideration for the feelings of others

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as well as the blow with the heavy boot prompted him to moderate his voice, although he was in great pain. It was unusual for him to be taken ill, but to men like himself illness comes suddenly, and nobody cared what happened; least of all O'Calligan. Next morning he was found stiff and cold with a tranquil look in his eyes and the ambulance came and took him away.

The life of a down-and-out is an endless weary round consisting of sleeping, drowsing, dreaming and fasting, with nothing to stir his sluggish faculties or excite his interest. His mental perspective is a grey drabness, and there is a glazed look in his eyes as if he were already dead: a dumb instinct gives movement to his limbs and power to his voice.

He slips into reading-rooms, sits in the park when the days are warm

and leans against the street corners, never doing anything all day long except stare before him with a solemn contemplative look on his face as if waiting for something to happen. He is very patient and seems so impressed by the idea that something must take place in the near future that the present does not concern him, and the desire to read, study or even work has no attraction whatever. Something is going to happen, and time has ceased to mean anything to him. Nothing ever does happen. The world moves on and the down-and-out grows older with the years; but he never changes his habits: it does not occur to him that things are happening all around him, and it would seem he is waiting for something different. Unfortunately he is very taciturn, and says very little, even when he is in a good humour.

# ‘To Be or Not To Be’ : A Revelation

by W. J. Lawrence

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THOUGH the intriguing character of Hamlet has been minutely X-rayed by a good many astute intellects with the hope of determining why he procrastinated so disastrously in swooping to his revenge, it is noteworthy, if by no means astonishing, that no one has entertained any suspicion of Hamlet's possession of an initial, though impermanent, trait which only awaits full recognition to afford a rational and conclusive solution of the perplexing mystery. The reference here is to a line of thought which the young prince for a time obstinately harboured but which certain curious circumstances have long obscured; and it is part of the purpose of the present study to remove the difficulties barring the way to a proper understanding of the matter. My main aim is to show that at the outset of the play in one of its earlier forms Hamlet had absolutely no belief in the existence of ghosts, and that his delay in fulfilling the grave task imposed upon him was wholly due to the stubborn persistence of that concept. Scepticism of this order, we know, was far from a common Elizabethan attitude, so far indeed that it flew in the face of popular

opinion, but we require to bear in mind that even Horatio shared it, though of the two he was the quicker to be convinced of his mistake.

*Hamlet* was the one play of Shakespeare's with whose approach towards perfection he was seemingly never satisfied. This is evidenced by the fact that for a considerable number of years – possibly a whole decade – its acting text was kept in a state of flux. One must remember that in this case as in a few others, Shakespeare was dealing with a theme which had already had more or less competent stage treatment, and that he could only justify its re-handling by the superiority of his work. The story of the Elizabethan dramatizations of the old Danish saga is practically a reversal of the transformation undergone by Sir John Cutler's famous stockings, for what in the beginning was good honest worsted ended by becoming imperishable silk. The facts are so vague that one has to rely largely on inference, but it would appear that Shakespeare, while preserving the broad outlines of the primitive Hamlet play, by frequent revision, sublimated its thought and exalted its whole tone. Although it was not until

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the beginning of the seventeenth century that his name became identified with the theme, the probabilities are that his first retouching of the old play of doubtful authorship took place in 1594, when it was acquired by the Chamberlain's Men whose ranks he had just joined, and who revived it at Newington Butts in the June of that year. Later on, at any rate, he worked at intervals on the text, even changing the names of some of the characters, and eventually transmogrified the vigorous old melodrama of revenge into a reflective tragedy suffused with philosophical speculation. Whatever he may have owed to his predecessor, whether Kyd or another, of a surety the introspective Hamlet was solely his. There had been some foreshadowing of the type in the title character of *Richard the Second* late in 1595, and it is not improbable that the concept of the melancholy brooding Dane – no matter when it may have been put into execution – dates from that period.

Much of this is pure conjecture, but my argument in its totality is not devoid of sound foundation. It would be easy to show, if one dare go off at a tangent, that the second quarto of *Hamlet*, otherwise the first genuine text, is a revisal of an earlier Shakespearian text. Few scholars have grasped this fact. However they may have been occasioned, not all the alterations were for the best, and one at least – the only one germane to my subject – is a serious (and what is worse, ineradicable) blot upon the play.

There are cogent reasons for believing that that most famous of all soliloquies, 'To be or not to be' does not at present occupy the position for

which it was originally designed. Years ago, Professor A. C. Bradley had some suspicion to this effect purely because he found the speech occurring in a somewhat earlier scene in the spurious first quarto.<sup>1</sup> But he failed to see in this quarto what it really is, an ill-made version of the play botched up for a troupe of strollers, remarkable for its transpositions as well as its absurdities, and so far devoid of authenticity that no analogies can safely be drawn from it. Apart from this, it is noteworthy that other matters moved him to surprise. Is Hamlet, he asks, thinking of 'The Murder of Gonzago', which is to be acted in a few hours, and on which everything depends? And he answers:—

'Not at all, he is meditating on suicide; and he finds that what stands in the way of it, and counter-balances its infinite attraction, is not any thought of a sacred unaccomplished duty, but the doubt, quite irrelevant to the issue, whether it is not ignoble in the mind to end its misery, and still more whether death *would* end it. Hamlet, that is to say, is here, in effect, precisely where he was at the time of his first soliloquy ("O that this too too solid flesh would melt") two months ago, before ever he heard of his father's murder. His reflections have no reference to this particular moment; they represent that habitual weariness of life with which his passing outbursts of emotion or energy are contrasted.'

What I marvel over is that Professor Bradley's recognition of the fact

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearian Tragedy*, second edition, 1905, p. 132, note.

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that Hamlet had got 'no forrader', that he is here exactly in the state of mind in which he was in the first act, notwithstanding the intervening momentous visitation, failed to confirm him in his suspicion (though it may have been an afterthought as it is expressed in a footnote) that the great soliloquy had somehow slipped its moorings. Moreover, it bears of itself clear evidence that it comes belatedly. To make Hamlet speak of 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns' long after he had communed with his father's spirit is sheer absurdity. There have been not a few super-subtle attempts to explain away this anomaly, but all are futile. It is no matter of metaphysics. Since the reference predicates Hamlet's utter disbelief in ghosts, it must have been written to be spoken before that awe-inspiring interview on a remote part of the battlements took place. Remark that when told by Horatio and the watch of the visitations of the ghost, the young prince says:—

If it *assume* my noble father's person,  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself  
should gape  
And bid me hold my peace.

Exactly what was at the back of his mind when he thus expressed himself is revealed by what he says in the soliloquy at the close of the second act:—

The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath  
power  
To *assume* a pleasing shape; yea, and  
perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,

As he is very potent with such  
spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have  
grounds  
More relative than this.

It is not until the abrupt termination of 'The Murder of Gonzago' that he is fully assured he has been in actual communion with his father's spirit. He is prepared then to take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds.

My firm belief is that 'To be or not to be' was written for delivery, and for a time was delivered, exactly in the place now occupied by 'O that this too too solid flesh would melt'. Substitute the one for the other and the reference to 'the undiscovered country' gains rich dramatic irony, for hardly has it been uttered than Hamlet is given assurance of the recent return from that uncharted region of one he dearly loved. On more than one count, therefore, this is a highly disturbing revelation. But the question is, if the great soliloquy was thus originally situated, why was it ultimately removed? It seems to me that the whole trend of Hamlet's musing in it affords the answer. Apart from the fact that the speech is informed, appositely enough, with the scholar's melancholy, one may echo Professor Bradley and say that Hamlet's reflections 'have no reference to this particular moment', nor indeed to any moment. Dramatically speaking, that is its weakness. Superb as it rings, it is sheer divagation. One cannot well maintain that the character for once has spoken in spite of its creator, but it would certainly be permissible to surmise that for once the creator has spoken in spite of the



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character. Of a surety, if there be autobiography in any of Shakespeare's plays, it is here. He is writing out of his own experience, not of Hamlet's. When had the young prince suffered the pangs of despised love, the law's delay or the insolence of office? Tortures and humiliations such as these had not fallen to his lot.

Assuming the correctness of my surmise concerning the original position of 'To be or not to be', I take it that it must have been written in or about 1597, hardly earlier and certainly not much later. It would seem that after it had held its pristine position for a time either Shakespeare arrived personally at the conclusion that the trend of thought in the soliloquy was much too abstract for the situation or some such opinion was conveyed to him by some one on whose judgment he placed reliance, with the result that he set about writing a substitute. Hence the origin of 'O that this too too solid flesh would melt', which, in contrast to the other, has the merit of a particular relevancy. This, I think, is sensible enough, but the subsequent insertion of the eliminated soliloquy early in the third act cannot be as readily accounted for. One can only surmise that Burbage, haunted by the beauty of the lines and flattered by the impression he had made in their delivery, had begged for their preservation, and that

Shakespeare yielded to the entreaty, and, against his better judgment, placed the soliloquy where we now find it. The misfortune is that by this unhappy transference there has been brought about a fortuitous degradation of Hamlet's character. In its present position the soliloquy conveys to us what Shakespeare never intended. As Professor Tucker Brooke has well said:—

'The complete selfishness of the argument, the refusal to recognize any duty to live for the sake of his mission, and the astonishing "bestial oblivion" evidenced by the allusion to the undiscovered country on the tongue of one who has recently spoken with his own father's ghost — these all shock the attentive reader and show the speaker's intelligence at its nadir.'<sup>1</sup>

Mortal hand cannot now repair this fault. To discard the great soliloquy is out of the question, and to amend matters by placing it in its legitimate position is equally impossible. But something will be gained if scholarship ceases to be sand-blind upon the point and comes to recognize the truth. Luckily, such is the glamour of Shakespeare that not all the many flaws in *Hamlet* can diminish for reader or playgoer its perennial appeal.

<sup>1</sup> 'Hamlet's Third Soliloquy' in *Studies in Philology*, XIV, 1917, pp. 117 ff.

# Disembodied Lyrics\*

by Monk Gibbon

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## *INSPIRATION*

THOUGH that strong wine that others drank of was denied me, take these, if I have even touched it with my lips.

## *LOVE*

IF you would know what love is, then ask a child, or a slave, or a mother. But do not ask a lover for they know nothing of it.

## *LIFE*

LIFE is a tyrant that pushes us blindfold down a dusty lane. Nor do we know whence we come or what shall lie for us at the end of the road. Yet all the time we must go forward: for in truth it is not possible that one should turn back.

## *IN A GRAVEYARD*

Do not wonder that in this place much grass is growing, and names that once held honour now are hid, and that where flowers were planted weeds have sprung: for the living must think of the living, seeing that they themselves in so little while are dead.

## *DEATH*

NOTHING is certain save death. And even death they tell me is not certain. I am glad of it.

## *KNOWLEDGE*

A WISE man told me, 'Knowledge is nothing at all. Out of it comes sorrow only.' Yet when he had finished speaking, he said sadly, 'Would that I might know even this for certain.'

Another time he said, 'Do you hope to know all? You show yourself therein to be a fool. Shall the rocks give up their secret, or shall the stars break their long silence? Though they should do so even, yet do we still know nothing. Knowledge is not to be betrayed by these.'

## *NEO-PLATONISM*

THE soul, leaving its harbour for a little time, fares in the unknown. Nor is it aware at first what brought it. If it has sailed here before, it has forgotten: if it will sail again, that time will come. All is a going out and a returning. Do not forget this, soul. For though to one there may be fair days and a clear passage, and to another contrary weather, yet the course is for all. And when the voyage is accomplished, the haven will be recalled. Whence it put forth it will return, and whence it once set sail it makes its landfall.

\* I owe this title to John Eglinton, who used it in a letter to me in regard to some prose poems I had sent him. Those printed here belong to various dates and countries.

## Monk Gibbon

### *TRUTH*

BE very sure that truth is set a great way from you, nor need you hope to overtake it by your running. Not by climbing the far hills, behind which he has gone down, shall we draw nearer to the sun. Be patient: wait a little: to-morrow as you go forth to ploughing, maybe you will see him, for where the poplars touch the sky, upon the edge of the long plain, he passes often.

### *THE FRIENDS*

WASTE no more of your kisses, young girl, on this playmate or that, bestowing, when you meet, tokens of foolish love on those whose thoughts, like your thoughts, already should be elsewhere. It is time such kisses were forgotten. Why do you throw away that which if given, either in the orchard by the lakeside, when the cool breeze blows through the hedge at midday, or softly in the soft dark, or even in the chill dawn, when the minds of all save lovers are made wistful, were a thousand times sweeter both to give and to receive – if you but knew it?

### *DREAMS*

DREAMS are within her eyes. Life, I know you for a thief. You have stolen many things from me. Let that be. I am not complaining. But steal not these dreams from her, for he who steals dreams is accurst.

### *THE PLEA*

LOVE, be kind to this child, for they say that you wound many and that the wound with many is no light one.

You give happiness and with it come fear and trembling, you promise rapture and you leave pain. It is not right that those whose eyes are trusting, as her eyes are, should be hurt. Look elsewhere for your quarry. Choose others if you must, or, if you must choose her, let the arrow that touches be as gentle as her own caress.

### *THE CYNIC*

THE god is blind, surely; but his tongue, and not his eyes should have been taken from him. Love is a great liar to be promising many things and to give nothing, for there is nothing in it to be given. A queer season, when a man thinks he has slipped through a gap into the very fields of paradise – but not for long!

### *NOT TO BE*

WILL the river return to its source and those steep orchards which first saw it rise; will the trees forget the turning of the leaves and the short days and the brown-coloured grass, and put on bloom in autumn; will the sun come from behind a little hill that faces east, and cross the heavens, that I expect your beauty to be never lessened?

### *THE DENIAL*

PAY no heed to the many slanders that I have spoken of love; for it was a sweet time for all that; and as the scent of hawthorn sometimes will bring with it the sudden vision of a former spring; or as a few notes of music stirring in the mind may wake a melody we thought forgotten, so, even now, it needs only a small thing that I should be reminded of love's sweetness.

## Disembodied Lyrics

### *AUTUMN EVENING IN WAR TIME*

ABOUT this time the cows must be coming in from the fields and from the blue mist that is gathering along the hedges, and soon the shed will be warm with their breathing, and with the munching of sweet hay; and about this time a few late hens are going across the yard in the dark to the shelter beyond the barn near where the wood is stacked; and the dogs will be coming in out of the evening to the warm fire . . . and about this time we take the road to Souchez and to a place beyond it where there is a trench to be dug this night. And in the morning the cows will go out to the fields again; and the fowl will be stirring early and making a great noise in the far corner of the orchard where the bank is, for that is a thing they always do; and the dogs will be around the haggard or away off into the lanes; but who knows whether I shall be returning along the road from Souchez, for of the many that went there last night, only some came back, and there is no certainty in a life like this.

### *EPITAPH*

WASTE no words on me, saying that I loved war, or that I sought honour, or that I died splendidly. For it was the peace that I had once known that I loved better than all things in life; and it was the hills that I should not see again that my mind in those days was for ever seeking; and as for the manner of my death a thousand others with me died not differently.

### *AFTER WAR*

Now God be thanked that brought us

from that hour, and gave us in the finish quietness, and quiet roads again and quiet sleep.

### *THE TREE*

HOLLOWED out to form a trough into which the water runs in a clear stream as from a fountain, and in which horse and cow may drink, the tree that once clung to the mountain side questions the stream as to its comrades in that place from which they both have come. Are they still standing, and does the sunshine strike through their leaves and warm their branches? Or has the woodman taken them also, to fence his upland pasture, or to form a roof under whose wide eaves sleeps now some dreaming child?

### *YOKE FELLOWS*

HORSE, ox and mule, harnessed to the same shafts, strain at the same load; while the driver urges them up the steep street and the children from the tall houses on either side come from the pavement to add their cries to his. Shout, children. Crack your whip, driver. Strain, trio. For though you are ashamed to be seen together, each despising his neighbour and willing to leave the task to him, it is of the same meadow that you all are dreaming, and it is to the same stable that all three will come to-night.

### *THE CHALET*

WHEN you built your house on the ridge, farmer, you thought sadly doubtless of the steep climb up the winding path on summer evenings, and of the many winds that would blow under the

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wide over-hanging eaves in autumn, and of the pastures deep in snow in winter; but you did not know the joy that it would give me at this moment, seeing it upreared against heaven, standing upon the edge of the world, against its background of the blue spring sky.

### *SPRING RETURNED*

Now the breeze blows through the orchard and the apple blossom falls to the ground. In a little time the grass that reaches up to the lower branches will hide a flower, and a bird singing in the farther hedge sing and yet be hidden. Great wealth comes to all things. Soon the sun slanting through the leaves must search to find an opening. O earth reborn, breeze blown through the orchard on the hillside, sun untired – does the time come when a man will have as great joy in you as he did formerly, and even greater?

### *HOMAGE*

I LEAVE others to praise Rome whose seven hills have held the minds of men this long time; and Paris, made gracious by her trees and gardens and by the chestnut blossom in the Luxembourg gardens in spring; and London, mart of half the world. And I praise that grey city, slandered of many, burnt as Athens was by her own sons – Dublin, whose cup of mountains encircling her looks loveliest to those returning, and whose blue dusk and lamps at twilight have given many an exile pain.

### *THE MODERN WORLD*

SLEEP is harder than it once was, for

there is a hive where before there were a few honey cells, and there is concourse where there was once stray meeting. O jostling throng, for all your murmured boasting you have forgotten that first woodland sweetness.

Who would know them for what they were before? They wield lightning who once wove reeds. The swallow is outpaced, and they have harnessed the hidden springs of earth to help them. And the soul? Souls do not change.

These men, climbing the heaven, found in the clouds a highway that their fathers only dreamed of. They mounted skywards. But even there madness pursued them. For it is harder to escape from folly than from earth.

### *THE TROUBLER*

OUT of unending years of travail, so they tell me, did earth bring forth her last-born, Man. This is the creature that now troubles the whole universe with his crying. Nothing contents him. Dusk, that before pleased many, and dawn, that sets the birds about their praises, do not please him. The very face of her who bore him bears his scars. He boasts that he possesses everything, yet laments that he has nothing. Even the lovely night, that was before so silent, is spoilt by him. Only a few lonely places, where trees are, can sleep. O patient mother, worn out with so much folly, seeing thy work destroyed before thine eyes, how much longer has this to be endured? When will this troubler finish? Be sure that when he does, a change will come. All will seem strangely quiet.

## Disembodied Lyrics

### *ON SEEING A CHILD*

THEY tell me life is evil, and there were times when I believed them. But when I see you, I think that it is good, and, though the stream is often muddied, and days deny their promise, and many seeds are blown that will not blossom, God from an eternal fountain pours forth a clear stream, and the fountain leaps towards the sky.

### *OF ONE WHO HAS BEAUTY*

WHAT have they given you, they who gave all; wise thoughts to one man, sorrow to another, to a third a heart that no sad thought can enter?

Have they given you these things, or have they given you others like them, safe and secure, and in a quiet place? Or have they given you, rather, a gift that all hearts leap to tell of? – for hearts are foolish.

### *HE PROMISES HER IMMORTALITY*

I WILL carve a verse on some great face of rock, in some far place where winds are blowing; and when they who now read of you are dust, and their cities crumbled into a foolish memory, lovers, who still pass, may wonder at its strange surface, but they will know its meaning.

### *THEY WHO READ THEM . . .*

THEY who read them, and find there talk of many things, and a high hope, and thoughts belonging to the open spaces of the sky; and certainty, and beauty caught into a line, and praise of love; how should they know all things are born out of eternal conflict, and sweet songs out of blinded birds, and fine words out of poets broken upon the wheel?

# Domestic Interior

by Gerald Bullett

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HAVING told Ernie to shut the shop door, and having watched to see that he did it properly (for he did not trust this son of his) Mr. Alfred Byfield counted the day's takings, locked up the cash, and sauntered into the parlour. He was tired after the day's work, but he owed it to his dignity to saunter, and saunter he did: it was a gesture, unconscious or only half-conscious, of independence, a way of reminding himself that his soul was his own, and that being in his middle fifties, and having to sell tobacco, stationery, newspapers, gum, string, twopenny novelettes, chocolates, boiled sweets, nougat, liquorice allsorts, bachelor-buttons, and the rest of it, were facts that did not dismay him, and don't you make any mistake about that. The parlour was a small overcrowded room, full of heavy furniture upholstered in red plush. It was inadequately lit by a window that looked out upon a narrow asphalted side-passage shut in by the high blind wall of the next house. Mr. Byfield and his neighbours worked hard and late to keep the owner of this rabbit-warren in comfort and comparative idleness; if they had been organized in squads and driven to work with whips they could hardly have done more for him; but Mr. Byfield for

one was so far from thinking of himself as a slave that any attempt to set him free would have seemed to him a dangerous innovation. Mr. Byfield's fireside chair was placed with its back to this window, so that Mr. Byfield could read in comfort, for he was known as a great reader; and the rest of the family managed as best they could and saw no injustice in the arrangement, making the most of the dim light that filtered through the frosted pane set in the door intervening between themselves and the shop. Despite its deficiencies Mr. Byfield entered the parlour with an air of satisfaction and even of self-satisfaction. Trade had been brisk to-day; besides his regular customers, many strangers had dropped in for a packet of ten, or an ounce of this or that; there had been quite a run on the evening papers; and the Tottenham murder had provided him with a great deal of very agreeable conversation. To say that he was looking forward to his evening would be an overstatement, for he gave the matter no conscious thought; but the fact that he was now for a few hours a free man, and the fact that he would use his freedom in a manner prescribed by his daily routine, this double fact, a paradox but not a contradiction, un-

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doubtedly gave colour and quality to this moment of release, and imparted good temper to the voice in which he remarked on the absence of his wife. 'Hullo, where's Mother?' The room was empty; the words fell on no ears but his own. But he did not mind that, for the sound of his own voice was always a pleasure to him, and he was in the habit of offering himself, a willing and appreciative audience, a kind of running commentary on the moving picture of life. Customers often caught him at it, and were seldom tempted to laugh, for it was somehow all part of his character, and Mr. Byfield's opinion of that had proved infectious to all but a negligible few. The table was covered with a soiled white cloth which had grown old in the service of the Byfields, and crocks had been set out for the evening meal. Four places had been laid. 'What's this mean?' asked Mr. Byfield. 'Who's coming?' In his heart he hoped it might be Dolly, who was turning out such a credit to him. 'Time she came to see her old Dad,' he said. But observing that the preparations were incomplete – for where was the bread, where were the teacups, the jam, the pot of pickles? – a spasm of indignation moved in him and he went over to the inner door, opened it quickly, and called 'Mother! You coming, Mother?' A distant cry reassured him, but he could not refrain from retorting 'Shop's been shut these *ten* minutes.' He went to his accustomed chair and sat down, remarking, again aloud, that it was a good job he was a patient man. His patience, however, was not overstrained; for within three minutes Mrs. Byfield came into the room bearing on

a tray all the articles whose absence had caused him disquiet.

'I was out in the garden,' said Mrs. Byfield, flattering with this designation the small square patch of ground whose diagonal accommodated two posts and a nine-foot length of clothes-line. 'It's my belief there's a shower coming.' The pocket of her apron still bulged with clothes-pegs, for she knew Alf didn't like being kept waiting for his food, and so had not spared a moment in which to rid herself of them. 'I've got a pair of nice kippers for you to-night,' she said.

'Ah,' said Mr. Byfield. 'And I can do with 'em.' He grunted a little as he took off his boots. 'Where are my slippers, Glad?'

'Where they always are,' said Mrs. Byfield. But she left the table, nevertheless, to get them for him from under his own chair. Scenting his impatience she had been prepared to propitiate him, and equally prepared, if need arose, to answer sharpness with sharpness; but the hint of sharpness that had inadvertently slipped out was due not to irritation but to a momentary surprise that was almost confusion. After being Mother for a quarter of a century or more, it always made her 'feel funny' to be reminded that she had received another name, Gladys, in holy baptism. It made her, in fact, feel girlish, you and me together, quite like old times; and since to feel girlish at her age was foolish, and perhaps not quite proper, the effect of it all was disturbing and confusing, so that you didn't hardly know where you were.

'Ah,' said Mr. Byfield, receiving his slippers, and slowly, with the



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effect of much dignity, putting his feet into them. He nodded at the table. 'Who's coming?'

Mrs. Byfield was an unremarkable woman, the sort of woman you could meet three times and fail to recognize at the fourth meeting. Nor would she have taken offence at this failure. She had never made the mistake of regarding herself as of much importance. Mr. Byfield, she thought, had importance enough for two; and there wasn't really room for any more of it in the house when he was at home. She was content to have it so. She did not share her husband's view of himself, but she did not resent his having it, and during her thirty years of marriage had learned unconsciously to allow for it in all her calculations. If this was wisdom in her it was an instinctive wisdom, which she was not aware of possessing. Indeed she was unaware of much that went on, within her and without. She neither enjoyed her married life nor disliked it: she took it for granted, and it had never for one moment occurred to her that things could be different. She was of medium height and stocky figure, with black wispy hair and a rather square face. Spectacles combined with her thin sharp nose to give her a slightly owlsh appearance, but the suggestion was not strong enough to make her memorable. In earlier years Mr. Byfield had sometimes caught himself feeling weary of seeing her about the place, and wishing for a change; but temptation had never synchronized with opportunity, so instead of being unfaithful he had been querulous and sarcastic. But all that was over and forgotten, and nowadays, at his age,

change was the last thing he wanted. It was not, precisely, that the two liked each other better: it was rather that they had learned how to avoid occasions for conflict, had elaborated a technique for living in the same house and sharing the same bed without often noticing that the other was there. Mrs. Byfield regarded her husband as something inevitable and unalterable, like the weather. And Mr. Byfield had got used to his wife just as he had got used to his corns.

'Who's coming?' echoed Mrs. Byfield. 'Who but our Dolly?' she asked rhetorically.

Mr. Byfield sat up in his chair, and his eyes protruded with something that threatened to be indignation. 'Indeed? First I've heard of it. Why wasn't I told?'

'Because you were out of the shop when the card arrived,' answered Mrs. Byfield. 'And because I didn't think to tell you when you came back to serve.'

'What card?' demanded Mr. Byfield.

'Dolly's card, to be sure. Post-card it was. Sech a pretty picture of the little girls with their hockey-bats. Hopes to be along about nine o'clock, she says, and stay the night. And she says not to wait supper.'

'Very kind of her,' said Mr. Byfield, with heavy irony. 'Nine o'clock indeed. What a time to come! Serve her right if we was all in bed.'

'Go to bed if you want to, dear. Feeling tired?'

'It'd teach her a lesson,' continued Mr. Byfield, who had not heard the remark. 'I should be sorry if any daughter of mine was to turn into one

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of these *modern* girls we read about. After I've pinched and saved to give her a good education like I have.'

Mrs. Byfield handed him his tea, and just as he liked it, a dark brown brew, with three lumps of sugar to take the edge off. She had no remark to offer about Dolly's education, was unmoved by his complacency and undismayed by his forebodings. Dolly, a clever and industrious child, had made quite a habit of winning scholarships; and now, at twenty-three, she was teaching in a secondary school with every apparent success, thus compensating her parents for the loss of Agnes, their eldest, who had married beneath her, and not a moment too soon. Mr. Byfield felt it his duty to find fault with his children to their faces, and think well of them, if he could, only behind their backs: in no other way could a family be controlled. And he failed to see any significance in the fact that Dolly, the least scolded, had turned out a Credit, while her sister Agnes had been a Disgrace, and her young brother Ernie, though conscientiously cuffed from time to time, was already in process of becoming a Worry.

'And where's Ernie got to?' asked Mr. Byfield. 'Doesn't milord want any supper to-night? You're too soft with that boy, Mother.'

'A pair of nice kippers these are,' said Mrs. Byfield, putting the plate in front of him. 'Eat them while they're hot. It'll do you good, I'm sure. . . . Ah, that'll be Ernie, I expect.'

Making too much noise, as he always did, Ernie flung himself into the room. He was nineteen and beginning to feel his age: a slim, strong,

pasty-faced youth, with a curve in the lips that suggested cunning, and a boldness of eye that suggested insolence. The movements of his limbs were coltish, awkward, vigorous, provoking in his father a reluctant admiration and a resentful envy. The stream of life in this young man was too copious: it made Mr. Byfield's seem the merest trickle.

'And what's been keeping *you*, my boy?' asked Mr. Byfield. 'Punctuality, they say, is the politeness of princes.' Fortified by a mouthful or two of kipper, he was growing more genial.

'Had to go down the road,' said Ernie. He did not explain the nature of the compulsion, but his manner betrayed his consciousness of what his father suspected: that there was a girl in the case. And why the hell shouldn't there be? said Ernie to himself. 'Looks to me as though that fellow'll swing. What d'you think, Dad? Say, Mum, gis a cup of tea.'

'D'you mean the Tottenham business?' Mr. Byfield swallowed hastily, and took a gulp of tea.

'You sit down, Ernie,' said Mrs. Byfield, 'and then you shall have your cup of tea. You oughta been here before, as well you know.'

'Oh, don't go on at the boy, Mother.' Mr. Byfield cleared his throat, and the noise somehow suggested a royal proclamation. 'I had a bit of an argument with one of the customers about that case. I passed the remark, same as you, Ernie, that things looked pretty black against the prisoner. Shouldn't care to be in his shoes, I said. Customer says, Do *you* believe in hanging 'em, Mr. Byfield? he says.'

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'A nice subject for the supper-table, I must say,' remarked Mrs. Byfield in a tone of banter.

'You can't deny a murder makes good reading, Mum,' said Ernie, teasing her.

'Would you like to be at one?' asked his mother.

'Depends where I was sitting,' said Ernie. 'Not in the dock I wouldn't.' He laughed, relishing his smartness.

'So I said, What else can you do with 'em?' Mr. Byfield continued his narration. 'Hanging's too good for some of them, I said. They ought to be done to as they did.'

'Well, this Tottenham chap,' remarked Ernie, 'seems to have done the job with a hairbrush, by all accounts. Take a bit of doing with a hairbrush, I should say. But I'd like to see you having a try, Dad. Expecting a visitor?' he added, noticing the fourth place set at table.

'Your sister Dolly is paying us a call,' said Mr. Byfield, with humorous grandeur. 'If she can get away from her numerous engagements.'

Ernie acknowledged the information with a grunt, and instantly became aware of his mother's eyes fixed penetratingly upon him.

'It's a long time since we saw our Dolly,' she remarked pointedly.

'Yes,' agreed Ernie. 'Matter of fact, I've got a date to-night. So unless she looks sharp I shall miss her.'

'Can't you put it off for once?' pleaded Mrs. Byfield.

Ernie shook his head, flushing. 'Imposs.'

'The pictures again, may I ask?' said his father, with ponderous humour.

To avoid further inquisition Ernie stuffed a piece of bread and cheese into his mouth and washed it down with tea. He got up, scraping his chair on the ground as he pushed it away from him. 'Well, so long, folks!' Aware that his hunger was still unsatisfied, he glanced involuntarily at his father's now empty plate. 'Enjoy your kippers, Dad?'

Before Mr. Byfield could have replied, Ernie was out of the room. But Mr. Byfield, having missed the point of the question, had no intention of replying except with a bare acknowledgment of the unexpected courtesy. He glanced at his watch. It still wanted twenty minutes of nine o'clock. Time for a nap before Dolly arrived: she was sure to be later than she had said. He was secretly excited by the prospect of her visit, but at the moment he felt weary and drowsy. While Mother began clearing the dirty things from the table, Mr. Byfield removed his teeth, placed them in a wooden cigarette-box which he kept on a shelf at his elbow for that purpose (he was a man of method and had a place for everything), and leaned back in his chair with a contented sigh. Sleep, however, was warded off by a small quivering anxiety lest he should be caught by Dolly unawares; and when, some forty minutes later, the front-door bell rang, his eyes opened with a start and his hand groped hurriedly for the wooden box. Then, having fixed his denture into position, he got out of his chair and assumed a commanding attitude in front of the empty fireplace, while Mrs. Byfield went to answer the door. But he listened in vain for the sound of Dolly's high-

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pitched voice and refined articulation. What was going on? The suspicion that it was not Dolly after all, that he had had all his trouble for nothing, that perhaps Dolly wouldn't come this evening in spite of her promise, provoked in him an emotion that expressed itself as indignation. Here he was, the head of the family, a respectable hard-working tradesman; and nothing went right unless he saw to it himself. In some obscure fashion he felt that it would be his wife's fault, and his son Ernie's, and the world in general's, if Dolly failed to put in an appearance. That it would be Dolly's fault, too, went without saying, young people nowadays being all alike, even the best of them; no consideration for a father's feelings, no common gratitude; slave you do and slave you may, and what thanks do you get? That was what Mr. Byfield wanted to know. But what he wanted to know even more immediately was what Gladys was doing at the door so long. If the girl's come, bring her in. If she's not come, shut the door and let me have my nap out in peace.

He was on the point of explosion when the sound of the door being shut eased the tension of the moment. But his irritation was renewed at sight of Mrs. Byfield. Dingy and forlorn, she stood looking at him, with fear in her bespectacled eyes. Her accustomed serenity had vanished.

'Well I must say . . .' began Mr. Byfield, not knowing in the least what he must say, knowing only that he was a much-tried man. For it was plain that Dolly had not come.

His wife interrupted him. 'It's Dolly,' she said.

'What d'you mean, it's Dolly?' he asked angrily. But he saw that she had a paper crumpled in her hand. 'D'you mean she's not coming?'

'An accident,' said Mrs. Byfield. 'She's in hospital.'

'There!' shouted Mr. Byfield. 'What did I tell you!' Meaningless words: he had told her nothing. Dolly in hospital. He snatched the telegram out of her hand, and read it. 'Them blasted cars ought not to be allowed.'

'Oh, do be quiet, Alf! It's *Dolly*, I tell you. And us standing here,' she added, suddenly coming to life.

The appeal sobered him a little. 'Get your hat on then. Where are my boots?'

'And I'm all untidy,' said Mrs. Byfield, hurrying into the passage.

As he lugged on his boots — he was a man who had never taken to shoes — he heard her moving about the bedroom above. 'Take her an hour to get ready,' he grumbled. But he remembered, with a sort of surprise, that Dolly was her daughter as well as his; and the thought invested the drab woman with a new quality, so that he was suddenly impatient to see her again; but when three minutes later he met her at the bottom of the stairs, something made him avert his eyes. 'Come on, do!' he said. His right arm moved blindly round her bony shoulders and for a moment rested there.

That moment passed quickly, and the mood with it. Mr. Byfield lapsed into peevish annoyance with all the inconsiderate circumstances that were forcing him to break his routine. Surely a man had a right to a quiet

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half-hour after his supper? Yet here he was, being forced to an untimely exertion of his heavy unalert limbs. It was astonishing how people *would* get in his way, and infuriating that they should be so cheerful about it. Boarding the tram was like a sick dream, everybody moving with the most fantastic deliberation, as though resolved to delay Mr Byfield as much as possible. At intervals throughout the journey he felt compelled to mutter at his wife: 'Some people don't seem to know what time is' Not once, however, did she answer him: a fact that heightened his sense of grievance. Dolly had plucked him from his chair and was dragging him across London, but his thoughts were not of Dolly; by some trick they managed to avoid Dolly, until the sight of the hospital sent them swarming back to her. Somewhere in this building . . . it was hardly credible. Mrs. Byfield was suddenly in command, and Mr. Byfield in confusion. 'Have you, can you, accident, yes it's my daughter.' The man at the door was serenely helpful, wafting them on. 'And then ask again.' They asked again, and the nurse said follow me – like Jesus Christ, thought Mr. Byfield, and good shepherds came into his fantasy, and Christmas bells, and robins in the snow. And all the while he was getting nearer the moment when he must see Dolly.

All his truculence was now gone. He was awed into a feeling of insignificance by the atmosphere of this strange new world. It was like being in church, yet unlike it as well, for the quiet of this place had a sinister quality, clean, bare, cold. And now

the ward-sister had possession of them: he and Gladys stood before her like a pair of shabby school-children, downcast and docile, listening respectfully while she spoke of Dolly's accident and Dolly's condition. The patient has just regained consciousness. They might see her, if they wished, for three seconds, no longer: she must not be expected to talk.

'Is she . . .' said Mr. Byfield. 'I mean, will she . . .?'

'She has everything on her side,' said the ward-sister. 'We're going to give her a nice sleep.'

So they went and looked at the death-pale stranger that Dolly had become. She smiled at them with her eyes, though her mouth was misshapen with pain. Dolly's mother stared while she could: Mr. Byfield glanced in dismay from one to the other, startled to see a sudden beauty dawn in his wife's faded face. 'You're going to have a nice sleep,' he heard her say, but he was already groping his way back to the door, and in a moment Gladys was with him again, and asking questions of the sister.

'Here's the young man himself,' said the sister. 'He can tell you more than I can.'

Mr. Byfield turned to confront a tall youth who carried his arm in a sling and his head in a bandage. 'Huh!' he said. 'What's he got to do with it?'

'Oh,' stammered the young man breathlessly, 'are you Mr. and Mrs. Byfield? I'm so . . . I'm so . . . How's Dorothy now? I hope . . .'

'Dorothy?' echoed Mr. Byfield. 'If it's my daughter you mean . . .'

Mrs. Byfield intervened. 'Are

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you George? She was asking about you.'

'Who was asking about him?' said Mr. Byfield.

'Be quiet, Alf.' He was quiet.

'You see,' explained the young man, 'we were in the crash together. I was taking her for a run in the car, and I crashed. Like a fool, though it wasn't really my fault. It's no good saying I'm sorry. Worst of it is, I'm hardly hurt at all, and Dorothy . . .'

Mr. Byfield resented this George, resented his youth, his air of breeding, his making free with the name of Dorothy. If he must use a christian-name why not the name that was truly hers, and not this stuck-up, superior-sounding 'Dorothy'? Taking her for a run in the car, was he! And

what, Mr. Byfield asked himself darkly, were his intentions?

'Taking her for a run, if you please,' remarked Mr. Byfield, when they had gained the street. 'Nothing about bringing her to see us.'

Mrs. Byfield did not answer for a moment. She seemed to be lost in thought. When she did speak it was to say: 'Save your coppers, Father. We shall want 'em for the telephone.'

'Telephone?' he echoed vaguely.

'Yes,' she said. 'I've got the number safe and sound.' She gave him a smile and added: 'In my bag.'

The quality of that smile puzzled him. For the first time in thirty years Mr. Byfield was not sure that he quite understood this wife of his.

# Spaniards at Play

by George Woden

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I DID not go to Seville to see a bullfight; I went to see the great Cathedral and the Alcazar, and in memory afterwards the discomforts of the road made the journey a pilgrimage, and the subsequent delight a righteous reward. If there happened to be a bullfight while I was there I should probably go to see it – so I had said before going, but I did not add that I intended to arrive for a week-end, when, of course, the crowds would swarm to the bullring on Saturday afternoon, and I, being in Seville, would feel bound to do as the Sevillians do.

I did not see any hypocrisy in that. Indeed, I was not conscious then of any intense desire to see the national blood-sport of Spain. Have you ever spun a coin to decide something for you? 'Head I go. Tail I don't. Tail! Hang it all, I will go!' And so you come to realize how all through your indecision you really wanted to go. I didn't spin any coin. It happened to me in another way.

After my arrival I had at least an hour before dinner: it was only eight o'clock in the evening. Folk dine very late in summer in Southern Spain. I strolled under the palm trees of the Plaza Nueva, and entered a café in the Calle Gran Capitan. There I found the announcement I had expected, a huge gaily-coloured poster hanging

from ceiling to floor. Magnificent and Extraordinary Corrida! Six Selected and Beautiful Bulls. From the Very Celebrated and Accredited Herds of the Marques of Importancia. Sunday, at the usual time, five o'clock of the afternoon. Now there was no question as to whether I should go or not; as a visitor to Seville I was bound to study the local and national life in one of its most significant aspects. In a mechanical age people are seen better at play than at work. A pleasure for me, perhaps – certainly a duty. And then suddenly I realized the force of my real desire by the measure of my disappointment: this gorgeous poster announced the bullfight for a Sunday in September; we were now in July; moreover, indeed, it was for September of the previous year.

Evidently the bullfight is not a weekly sport, like the newly-imported *Futbol*, which I had already seen played in boots and bathing drawers under a burning sun. I learned from the newspaper that on this Sunday the bullring was to be used for a frivolous public to enjoy the bleating and capering of a set of nigger minstrels. A desecration of the bulls' sabbath.

I saw my bullfight at La Linea, on the day before I embarked at Gibraltar. La Linea is only a tiny town, and the local *fiesta* would be enjoyed with all the

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gusto which so many sophisticated people in great cities have lost. The bullfight, however, was not merely a local affair. One of the most famous matadors of Spain was billed to perform. There were to be motor-bus excursions from all around, as far away as Malaga, special boats would cross the bay, and a steamer was to bring enthusiasts from Africa. I was warned that, since I had no ticket beforehand, I might not be able to get in unless I arrived early. Even the poor would be going in their thousands, although the cheapest price for admission was seven pesetas. With the exchange in our favour this would mean to me nearly three and sixpence, but to a poor Spanish working-man it must have represented far more. Seven pesetas in the glare of the sun. Fifteen pesetas for the cheapest seat in the shade. Hard, uncomfortable seats. And thousands of folk looking forward eagerly to the sport.

I crossed early after lunch from Algeciras with a good-tempered crowd of working-men and their families in their Sunday best, their hair, gold teeth, rings, patent leather shoes, all shining bright. When a water-seller's jar was smashed on the quay everybody except the unlucky water-seller shrieked with laughter. Most of the women and the beautifully dressed little girls were going to the *fiesta*. The young men talked what they thought was manly talk and showed themselves off; the young women were brazenly self-conscious; and two English old maids, crossing to Gibraltar with a pile of luggage, smiled in merciful ignorance of the brutal jokes made by the hooligans beside them.

Ashore there was no need to ask the way. Into the omnibuses we swarmed, and at La Linea, where the crowd hesitated and divided, I followed a water-seller, who was sure to be going where folk would be most thirsty. A Café El Rodeo provided an unmistakable clue, and a moment later I saw the great enclosure. There were more than two hours to go before the bullfight, and already the crowd was almost fighting at the entrances. Should I grill myself in the sun? I mopped my wet brow, and decided for the shade. Hundreds of men and women seemed to have made the same decision at exactly the same time, and we jostled one another with the senseless and unnecessary haste and excitement which so easily stampede a crowd.

Inside – oh, the din! Water-sellers, beer-sellers, vendors of sweets, bread, wine, nuts, sausages; lotteries for bottles of spirits and liqueurs, cakes, shawls, lotteries for lotteries. A one-legged man hopping energetically on a crutch was selling tiny, numbered, pictured, and coloured tickets, corresponding to playing cards, half a peseta each. After a while he produced a pack of cards from his pocket, shuffled them, and requested an old lady to cut, whereupon the winner of the corresponding ticket received as his prize a tenth of a ticket in the State lottery. Amazed at the cripple's agility, success, and energy, I thought of Long John Silver. The sweat poured down his face; his brazen voice cracked; the crowd shoved him this way and that; still he sold his little tickets, at a quarter peseta when trade slackened, and tempted folk with the chance of



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fortune which obviously he did not hope for himself.

The press of people increased; the din became pandemonium. A fat woman sat on my feet, a thin man stuck his bony knees into my back, a painted beauty breathed garlic over me, the straws in my hired cushion turned to stones, my shirt was a damp rag. Conversations around me grew hot, and exploded, but nobody was seriously hurt.

At length the crowd in the sun, being more tightly jammed than we were, and suffering worse in the intense heat, rose in revolt. Young men leaped down over the barrier, climbed into the arena, and invaded the expensive seats. Their betters, resentful and in righteous wrath, sought to hurl them down as they climbed to the attack. Two beautifully dressed and armed policemen, helpless, ran to their officer for commands, and I expected to see the police in mass formation charge the mob and restore order. But no. The officer held out his gloved hands, shrugged his shoulders, and seemed to say, 'A gentleman cannot soil his white gloves on these dirty people. Disgraceful – they have no manners. I – I will not look at them.' And he turned his back while the sun-scorched ragamuffins fought their way triumphantly upwards, and then, like newly-rich everywhere, made friends with the best people and helped to keep the poor in their proper and lowly place.

I had had two hours to wait when I arrived. I glanced at my neighbour's watch. Heavens! I had four hours to wait. She laughed at my consternation, and explained that it

was a good watch, but erratic, and she offered me a slice of greasy sausage. Gallantly I accepted it – you don't notice other people's garlic when you are eating it yourself. She told me in Spanish that she spoke French, and I told her in French that I spoke Spanish. And so we gossiped. Our neighbours joined in, and we made a family party of it, while the sky rained coloured paper advertisements down upon us. Those of us who could read shouted the contents into the eager ears of those who couldn't. A brass band arrived; we saw the players' cheeks expand and redden, though not a note of music did we hear. When at last the president appeared we all cheered, standing up less to do him honour than to ease our hinder parts.

We threw our sausage skins and olive stones on the people below us, and shouted for the bull.

There was a well or cistern in the centre of the bullring. Into that a man dipped a bucket and filled a barrel. Other men with buckets filled them from the barrel and scattered the water over the sand. A hose and a pump would have done it far more quickly and effectively. In their action, however, I understood how the bullfight is not a mere sport, capable of improvement; it is a ceremony, its ritual hallowed by time and tradition, an inheritance from a belligerent past.

At one time, when war and pestilence set life more obviously upon a hazard, the man probably met the bull upon somewhat level terms, and his personal danger provided a public thrill for which in most of our spectacles we have substituted curiosity. There

## Spaniards at Play

is little or no curiosity about a bull-fight to-day. We knew that in twenty minutes the beast would be dragged out, a carcase, and we should howl in our tens of thousands for another.

The entrance of the matadors with their cuadrillas was a grand affair. In the blaze of the low sun they crossed towards the president, marching to music, exactly as such teams have marched for hundreds of years. The bright clothes, knee breeches and stockings, the little buns of hair worn by the men at the back of the head, the solemn and graceful posing – all helped to create the illusion of another and more magnificent age.

It was not until the horsemen were quite near that I realized what decrepit animals they rode, wretched things of skin and bone. The humanitarians have forced the picador to pad his horse, so that one no longer sees the beast's entrails dragging on the ground under him as he staggers across the ring. On the other hand, since the horse is not so easily killed by the bull, he is forced to face the torture again and again. There is no question about the horses' terror. They suffer atrociously, in spite of their having one eye covered so that they cannot see the bull when they are forced to face him.

The performers scattered. The president waved his handkerchief. The wooden door opposite swung open, and a huge black bull dashed into the ring, and stopped, bewildered by the catcalls, whistles, and shouts of the mob. A crimson cloak waved before his eyes; a painted doll of a man waved it again and again impudently. The bull snorted, and lowered his head, the sand flew up under his hoofs like a puff of

smoke, and then he charged; but the man was safe behind a narrow barrier, and the brute crashed into the wooden barricade.

Another man flourished a crimson cape. The bull was fresh and growing enraged. The man awaited the charge, and for an instant I was afraid. If the man darted aside one instant too late then he would be killed. But the bull did not seem to see the man; the red cloth took all his attention and his fury, until one cloak after another had so tormented him that he turned away from them all and sought to escape by the way he had come, and was bewildered not to find it.

There is no doubt a great deal of skill in this cloak play. Indeed, the spectators were highly critical, both appreciative and sarcastic. I did not, however, realize either the amount of skill or the actual danger until much later, when a youth leaped over the barricade, armed with a red rag and a wand, to put his amateur prowess to a public test. He was nearly gored by the bull before the professionals could save him and hand him over to the beautiful policemen.

In rode the picadors. Now the ring was full of officials, like the stewards of a public meeting. The bull looked on passively while the stable boys pushed, pulled, and thrashed the first horse towards him. The rider poised his lance, and the horse tried ineffectually to escape. It was a ghastly and disappointing business, utterly unlike anything which I had imagined, and to me lacking either sport or dignity. The bull seemed to understand the horse's predicament and to sympathize, for he

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had no quarrel with the horse, but he was goaded at last to charge, from a distance of four or five yards only; and as the lance struck him in the shoulder, and the red blood streamed over his black hide, he thrust his horns into the poor horse's belly. Over toppled horse and rider, crashing into the barricade, and the stable boys rushed to the rescue while the crimson cloaks hustled the bull out of the way. The picador, so padded that he could scarcely rise, was set on his horse again, like a puppet on a battered toy, and the wretched animal stood bleeding and shivering as the second horse was pulled, pushed and thrashed to take its ride to the attack.

My stomach turned over. I had had enough sport. Even apart from the nausea the spectacle was too stupid, too disappointing. But the men cheered, the women clapped their hands, while the blood dripped into the sand.

I was saved by a sudden and may-be incongruous thought. This was not a farce, a diverting travesty of a finer thing to make us grin; it was a serious spectacle, a national sport. Did the fault lie in me? Were the spectacular combats of the age of chivalry no better than this? Was that why Cervantes created the immortal Don Quixote to ridicule knight-errantry as a keenly intelligent man saw it?

Before I had ceased wondering the horses were gone to be doctored for their next ordeal, and the bull was facing the bandilleras. There is no denying either the skill or the spectacular value of this feat. It cannot be easy to run at a bull while he charges at you and to thrust into him, one into each shoulder, two long stakes decked gaily

with coloured paper. After the last bull's death the young men leap into the arena to snatch these precious souvenirs out of the carcase.

With five bandilleras tormenting him, and two great gashes from which the blood streamed, the bull faced the matador. Again I was disappointed. The matador's play with sword and red cloth was clever, no doubt, but I was too sorry for the bull. I had imagined a maddened charging bull being killed by a sword thrust. Actually the bull has no fight left in him when the crowd howls for his death. The matador failed with his first thrust; the sword struck a bone, and the bull's start of agony tore the sword out of the man's hand. The spectators howled and whistled, and the man's nerve seemed to give way under their derision. He took another sword, and failed again – and again a third time. The bull knelt down to bleed to death, and had to be ignobly slaughtered, while the mob shrieked at the luckless matador, and threw other people's hats, bottles, food, and cushions at him. The situation was saved by the arrival of the mule team, the driver, with tall hat, cigar, and whip, playing the comedian to divert the crowd, so that the carcase was dragged gaily out, to the accompaniment of bells, cracking whip, and applause.

The second bull refused to fight. He refused to attack the picador, but a well-aimed hard cushion knocked, or rather startled the man off his horse, and his rage and indignation were so much better than the bull's that the crowd's disappointment changed to laughter.

The second matador failed,

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although, according to the bills, he had just returned from triumphs in South America. The third, however, was one of the most famous matadors in Spain, a popular idol. One of my neighbours told me his income; it sounded a tremendous sum in pesetas. Indeed these favourites are very highly paid. And this man was certainly both clever and daring. He played the bull so well with the scarlet muleta that he was able to hold the poor dazed brute

by one of the horns and to offer him, as it were, to the president and the ladies. The spectators nearly went mad with delight. Then he slew the animal with a single sword thrust. It was a magnificent display of nerve and skill.

But I felt sick, and I couldn't escape. I couldn't budge. And so taking my pleasure sadly, I sat out my first and last bullfight to the end.

# The Tip

## by John Pudney

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'HONEST, I don't care about 'em one way or the other. Don't cost much and they're under cover, I suppose. Still there's plenty more to do now the fine weather's coming.' Yes, there must be plenty to do.

So Emma, his sister, went off to the movies without him. She went every Monday and every Friday: Monday to cure her depression at starting another week, Friday to celebrate pay-day. 'It's a treat to give yourself up and forget yourself.' He had watched her emotion, the quiet movement of her breasts. What had she to forget? Having brotherly knowledge of her, he was not often curious of her body: but he had noticed that slow developing growth of her breasts, that final difference between them.

She went off to the movies without him, and he sat at home reading the evening paper, turning the pages quickly. For three or four days now he had meant to go to the Institute, read the papers there, and play billiards. Every time he had set out he had found it impossible to get farther than the corner by the 'Yorkshire Post'. Here they all leant against the railings and the Snipe would lurch up inquisitively amusing himself with the knot of half-grown girls. Emma

quarrelled with him some six months ago and had never come back to stand on the corner with the rest of them. Perhaps Snipe took that rather to heart, having been told publicly that he was useless even a good ornament: he had changed after that evening. They now talked politics until the Sissies tired of hearing them and made faces. The Snipe had coarsened, began to refer to the boy Butty as 'comrade' with a considerable wink and took to wearing his khaki shirt with a one-and-sixpenny scarlet tie, a lush silky tie from Tottenham Court Road. The Snipe was deservedly reckoned the leader of the little group at the corner. Like a good leader, he was active and always full of variety.

Young Jack Spiking balanced the possibilities of the corner against those of the Institute whenever his sister went out in the evening. It was certainly quieter at the Institute, no back-chat to keep pace with: but the stale sanctity of the Gothic building confirmed the sluggish sanctity which flowed in the blood of those who were to be found there. They were like boys at school, bum-crawlers. Yes, they were so often like the worst boys at school, spotty and stupid and full of immodest goodness. Why are none of my friends men, any of them? No

## The Tip

wonder Emma goes to the movies, no wonder she gets a kick out of that.

Well, I am alone. I am fed up with being alone, with being the boy Jack Spiking. If I had a man's job and earned a man's money I suppose it would be different in the evening. I would go into the pub or I would stand outside and argue with the Snipe: that would be different.

He spread out his hard oily hands on the table and regarded them with admiration. He always admired the shape of his hands, he was so familiar with that part of him, taking pride in their subtlety, their usefulness. Here was one of his vital points of pride, the consciousness that he wished for in his surroundings. He felt the emptiness of the sultry tenement room. There was no pride, no anger, no awe; though those at the Institute clung to their religion he could feel no respect for them. And they had no connection with the workshop bench or with the shops in Tottenham Court Road. His father, sitting one evening by the fire, had looked at him with strange sober eyes and said, 'It's a woman you need, lad: a good woman as'll exhaust you and make a man of you: if your mother was alive she'd say the same thing.' His father had meant well; in his sudden sober moment he had spotted a loss, a failure in the boy's temperament. He regarded women as fulfilment of all needs, magnet of health and unhealth.

The Snipe, at the corner, was full of hate now. He sneered and pointed at him when he hung about and looked discontented. 'You're not class-conscious, you softie. You can't think for yourself.'

It was so difficult to understand that without the quality of love, how could he hate? Without the mature strengthening stability in his loins, how could he love? He was not aware of women as his father assumed he need be. One day he would have a best girl, he knew that, a friend of Emma's.

What would he do? He carefully folded the evening paper, put on his cap and went into the warm streets, alone, self consciously lonely. When he came in sight of the 'Yorkshire Post' he saw the yellow Bugatti standing outside. The young man, Bolding, came out with two quart bottles, and laid them down in the back of the car. Then he got in and roared up the engine, slipping it into bottom gear. He called out Hullo and waved when he went past and Jackie lifted his paper and half saluted in reply. He liked that secret warm smile from the boy in the car. He was warm and vital, driving his gleaming expensive car.

He knew the car well because it garaged in the workshop where he worked. Young Bolding often came for it during the day, always in a hurry, impatient to rush off like the chuckling Bugatti engine. He often put down his blow lamp and watched the whole proceeding, signalling when the car was backed. He enjoyed the operation, the cheerful shouting noise, and being called Old Man by Bolding. Going towards the 'Yorkshire Post,' he felt emboldened by that quick stinging little glance, that easy exchange. Why stand to-night against the railing. Jingle your money. Go on, jingle your money and walk up and go in.

'Hullo, Jackie.'

## John Pudney

'Evening, Snipe.'

'Your pals all got cars nowadays?'

The girls giggled at this. They admired the spectacle of Bolding and the car. He was as good as anything on the movics. But he took no notice of them, rushing out of the pub. He didn't say 'Hullo' to them.

'Come and have a drink, Snipe.'

There, he'd said it; in front of all of them, committed himself to the decision, a decisive change of action, and he had remained calm, nonchalantly standing in front of the group, cutting off from them.

Snipe followed him in. He turned, not knowing what to ask for, saw Snipe like a naughty schoolboy hesitating and ill at ease. How different he looks, flicking about with his silly red tie, not knowing what to have.

Then old Jenks tapped him on the shoulder; old Jenks still in his bluish dungarees, and he must have had a good many drinks since the shop shut.

'What's yours, youngster? Never seen you in here before. Thought you was a *good* boy.' They all laughed, but they were kindly, welcoming him among them, one of the lads at the shop. Decent of old Jenks.

'Beer? Give him a pint of beer, Miss. And what about your friend; what'll your friend have?'

They had three pints; struggling and gulping to get the warmish beer down. Then the Snipe jibbed.

'I think as how they'll be looking for me at home.' Nudging young Spiking, he ambled to the door, and Jack followed him; but feeling of a sudden more than twice his own size.

And they began to walk, slowly at first, but stepping out as their thoughts cleared and became active. The Snipe began to persuade him again.

'You are nothing: you are just so much *use*, so much labour as can be bought by any capitalist as takes a fancy for yer. Without yer wages, you're damn all, useless.' He spat ruthlessly and rumbled with the unusual beer. 'Why don't yer take it up, Jack Spiking, why don't you think for yourself, be a member of the proletariat? That's honest, that is.'

The beer and the talk: the unusual walking, all round the streets behind King's Cross made him think with a strange excitement. The emptiness of past months awaited behind him like so many blind streets. He thought of the workshop, old Jenks and the other men and felt happy about them. They are our kind: who, what? the proletariat! Then Snipe was rushing through the future, with pent-up imagination ravishing future time.

But I don't *hate*. The pride of his hands, the doing of his job, his respects moved him. That hard determination of growth withheld him from clasping the Snipe's hand or swearing him brother alone in the blind shrunken streets behind King's Cross. In the future: in the future I shall have my best girl. Yes, get a woman, get a woman. The beer had precipitated another lust also. Simple lust of the body: his dream of adventure, prancing and dancing in the road in front of him and the Snipe.

'Look at what's'isname. Your posh pal with the car. What's he done for it? What's he do to have a great yellow pram like that? I bet

## The Tip

that money'd keep ten working-class families, ten of *us* for a year. He's got no bloody right, the skunk. Flashing about and spitting at us, the skunk.'

'No, Snipe, you're wrong. No, Snipe, he ain't no skunk. He's as good as you and me: and good as any of us. What do you know but he don't do good and all. 'Sides I know 'im: he's a friend of mine!'

The warm eyes of the boy Bolding. The gentle forthright movement when he came for the car and backed it out, laughing and sensible. Is this man my enemy? Shall I hate this man?

'Keep your rotten hate, Snipe!' Like a hopeless, muddled map it swam round him in the night, huddling the hopeless streets, these slums spread across his opening mind. Let us clear them away, burn, blow up, break down. But here is my own life, I have friendship. I can admire: I can respect. I am flexible, resisting, undecayed. I will not be alone nor give in or stand at the corner with ashes in my mouth, and talk to the pimply youths from the next street.

'Snipe, you can keep your hate!'

In the morning old Jenks took the trouble to ask him how he got on. Did he have a lively evening? Did he hold his beer? Feeling better in the greasy sunlight of the workshop he grinned and became very happy, glad to have grown up in a night, to be one of them. The lurch into maturity being so sudden as to be exquisitely exciting: the renewal of values.

So he watched John Bolding arguing with George Simms, the mechanic,

about the front brakes on the Bugatti. He felt grateful to him secretly.

And they all gave him a hand, shoving it because he was in such a hurry.

'Blast. She's all oily, George!' A thick splurge of oil all round the top of the steering column. 'Anyone got a rag?'

Young Jack knew he wanted to do it immediately. This personal action to help his friend. Wage slave to help his enemy. He glanced round quickly for cotton waste. Where was it? Then he hesitated, turned about and flicked his own handkerchief from beneath his brown overall.

'Here we are.' Voice quick, but steady. 'Here let me do it.'

'Oh, I say, don't you bother, you'll get filthy.'

Bolding smiled right into him, taking his favour: his voice close, considerate, one friend to another.

And Jack Spiking did it neatly, holding his head down over the wheel. The handkerchief was greeny-black with oil.

'Awfully good of you.' He stood clear, waiting for the car to start up. But the Bugatti hesitated. Bolding continued to smile at him. 'Look, get yourself a drink.' He leant over the door holding the money. 'Get yourself a drink, old chap.'

I can't speak. I must say something. How can I get away, how can I avoid? Why am I taking this money . . .? 'Well, thank you. Thank . . . you . . . SIR.'

Like the sweat from great exertion the emotion spread. He grasped the sixpence in his hand as if he would bend it. Wage slave, wage slave,



## John Pudney

where is your friend! Whom do you respect, where is your respect?

‘Emma: I am going out.’

‘Again? Every night you rush out, all full of yourself.’

‘Hold your tongue and get to your blasted movies.’

‘I only go twice a week. Only twice, Jackie!’

‘All right, Emma. Emma, don’t cry.’

### *OVERHEARD*

DOROTHY PARKER was asked her opinion of a popular and over-praised actress: ‘O! What do I think of her? She runs the gamut of emotion from A to B.’ And was it Mrs. Parker or another who, commenting on a new play, complained quietly: ‘I saw it under very poor conditions. The curtain was up’?

A HISTORICAL novel is like a bustle, for it is a fictitious tale based on a stern reality.—  
J. R. ANGELL.

THE cure for anything is salt water — sweat, tears, or the sea.—ISAK DINESSEN.

ONLY a convict likes to be stopped in the middle of a sentence.

THE dimmest lights have the most scandal power.

## Reviews

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EARLY VICTORIAN NOVELISTS. By DAVID CECIL. Constable. 10s.

DICKENS. By ANDRÉ MAUROIS. Lane. 5s.

THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY: A LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS. By HUGH KINGSMILL. Wishart. 10s. 6d.

THE great value of Lord David Cecil's just and sympathetic re-appraisal of the seven novelists with whom he deals is this: it is the work of a critic who is at home among later English and European novelists, and no less just to them because of his attachment to the Victorians. Too much defence of Victorian literature has been attempted by those who were either ignorant of or thoroughly inimical to the more recent developments – the wreaths given to the Victorian giants by such critics may have been green enough, but the attitude of the advocates has made the unsympathetic critic of Victorianism think of these advocates as men guarding and adorning graves in a cemetery rather than as men throwing open the gates of a garden. Lord David is not afraid deliberately to compare some of his Victorians with Proust or Lawrence; and he never makes the easy error of contrasting the virtues of the one with the faults of the other. His sense, which is acute and subtle, of the Victorian lack of form is expressed in strict and appropriate parallels, not by some generalized classical regulation: he shows, for instance, how far the Victorians depart from the lovely precision of Jane Austen, just as they did not attempt the organic beauty which marks the French novels of the day, and the novels of Turgenev. He might perhaps have made more of the mechanical causes of the pre-

vailing formlessness – the habit, common to Dickens and Thackeray, of writing month by month, with the author not always knowing what or who will arrive in the next month. It is no accident that the Victorians who are least faulty in form, Trollope and George Eliot, were not slaves to the printer's devil. The novelists here considered are Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Mrs. Gaskell, Trollope and George Eliot. Lord David claims for them all one great quality: each made a world. He convicts them (except Emily Brontë) of one grave fault – a tendency to attack subjects outside their range – to write, that is, novels of hazardous exploration into countries insufficiently mapped, instead of novels of experience. This fault was doubtless a part of that general eupeptic assurance of their time – was not the whole world the Englishman's, and he the best person in it? An incurable provincialism, as Mr. Chesterton points out in his *Victorian Literature*, marked all the great English writers of that period: Europe was their wash-pot and over the East they had cast their shoe – with the foot in it. It is typical of the age that so many Englishmen preferred Brussels to Paris. Lord David Cecil is certainly right in his contention that the refusal to stay within a world which they knew is responsible for much of the dead wood in Victorian fiction.

If a writer's creative imagination only works within a limited range, it is clear he ought to stay within it. The great conscious artists, Jane Austen, Flaubert, and Turgenev, do: and this is why they are so consistently successful. There is a great deal they cannot write

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about; but they do not try. Their limitations are outside their books, and so do not spoil them. Now to write outside their range was always a temptation to Victorian novelists, devoid as they were alike of critical intellect and that literary tradition which might supply its want. And the fact that they often yielded to it is the reason why their books appear to us, one hundred years later, such an extraordinary mixture of the living and the antiquated, the faded and the vivid.

They had, however, compensations: chief of which is the enormous gusto with which they attacked their work, the audacity with which they worked at the task of imaginative creation, at the making of their own worlds for their own creatures. All these essays are good – the best, perhaps, that on *Wuthering Heights* and that on Dickens. The Thackeray is too restrained in its praise; Lord David has difficulties with *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes* which he scarcely explains, and is he sure that the last grim suggestion in *Vanity Fair* that Becky Sharp might have made away with a feeble and sickly Jos Sedley is violently out of character? Selfishness of Becky's kind can become one of the purest, most unscrupulous emotions; its victim can grow to a condition in which anything wanted is a right, and the anticipating of a probably early decease a deed which will provoke little but self-approval.

Boldly and justly Lord David compares Emily Bronte to Blake. Those who remember her Irish and Cornish ancestry may quarrel with his statement that hers is 'an English imagination'; but it belongs to the mystical tradition which is one of the chief splendours of English poetry. After a careful analysis of *Wuthering Heights* and its conditions, he writes:

It is not incoherent. On the contrary, its general outline is as logical as that of a fugue. Nor is it an improbable

story. On the plane on which it is composed its every incident is the inevitable outcome of the situation. Still less is it remote from the central issues of human life. It may seem so, because it presents the world from an angle in which the aspects which bulk biggest to most novelists are hidden from its view. But those aspects with which it is concerned are nearer to the heart of life than those explored by any other Victorian novelist. Even the varied world-panorama of *Vanity Fair* seems trivial beside this picture of a sparsely-populated country village, revealed, as it is, against the background of the eternal verities. For in it Emily Bronte has penetrated beneath those outward shows of experience which are the subject-matter of Thackeray and his contemporaries, to the ultimate issues which are generally looked on as the subject-matter of tragedy or epic.

M. Maurais' book on Dickens has the easy charm, the deftness of presentation and that sense of pleasure in appreciation which disguise for a time his lack of any profound understanding of character. He is shrewd rather than wise; but his comparison of Dickens with Balzac has a genuine sensitiveness. Dickens's reputation in Europe has always been high; and it is too often forgotten that it has been very high with his fellow-novelists, especially with the great Russians. It is not the least of his claims to immortality that he was greeted as master by Tolstoy as well as by Dostoevsky. This strange fact does not in the least hamper Mr. Hugh Kingsmill from his task of throwing carefully discovered blackwash at the pediment of Dickens's statue. A critic who regards the *Pickwick Papers* as Dickens' greatest book is always suspect: such a judgement may be defensible, but it has to be defended, not taken for granted. Mr. Kingsmill's book is grievously mistitled: it is not a journey, it is naïve rather than sentimental,

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and it is not a life of Dickens. It is an essay in the application of psycho-analysis, imperfectly understood, to matters the relevance of which Mr. Kingsmill is apparently unable to grasp. In a long life of Dickens some such book as this, drastically revised and cut, might serve as a chapter – a piece of devil's advocacy to be answered before formal sentence is given. As it is, Mr. Kingsmill leaves the great Dickens legend exactly as he found it, none the worse and none the better for his own fantastic misinterpretations. These it is best to illustrate by citation. One of the most surprising concerns us rather than Dickens. Mr. Kingsmill finds that Dickens's readers are afflicted by 'extravagant sexuality'; his evidence for this remarkable invention is that it was to satisfy this deplorable trait that Dickens arranged a marriage between Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness. Before this Mr. Kingsmill has told us that Swiveller has 'hardened Dickens's heart at the outset by daring to form designs on Mary Hogarth, embodied in Nell.' It was, no doubt, Shakespeare's anger at Juliet's disrespect for Shakespeare's father, embodied in Montague, which led to that unfortunate death in the family tomb. It will be remembered that Seymour, who illustrated the *Pickwick Papers* when they began, committed suicide: Mr. Kingsmill was apparently well acquainted with Seymour's history, and present at the inquest, for he declares that 'the meeting with Dickens was clearly the culminating exasperation in Seymour's life.' Mr. Kingsmill asserts that Dickens 'had little affection for the poor,' his apparent feeling for them being a kind of self-pity, reminiscent of the days in the blacking-factory which he ought to have enjoyed. Also he was uneasy in his growing liking for 'the aristocracy.'

To soothe this discomfort he became increasingly sentimental about the poor, passing, in the nine or ten

years between the Cratchit family in *A Christmas Carol* and Jo, the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*, from such condescension to a mixture of maudlin pity and strident declamation, too vague to be vexatious, against the custodians of the social order. There was an element of fear as well as of bad conscience in his uneasiness. Tom-all-Alone's, the slum where Jo lives, rots and festers in a perpetual night which reflects the dread Dickens shared with other prosperous mid-Victorians of some convulsion in the depths below the opulent surface.

Most students of the Victorian age complain that the prosperous seemed hardly aware that anything was wrong below the surface, and think of Dickens as unusual in his knowledge: but Mr. Kingsmill knows better. One last specimen must be given of Mr. Kingsmill's Baconian analysis. Dickens, he writes,

was much startled when Forster pointed out to him that the initials of David Copperfield were his own reversed; but he might have been startled with equally good reason, had Forster pointed out that the first syllable in Dickens is twice echoed in Nicholas Nickleby, and once in Micawber, that the vowel sound of Charles reappears in Martin Chuzzlewit, Sydney Carton and Jarndyce (where 'Dick' is softened into 'dyce'), and that Dombey and Dorrit both begin with a 'D.'

So do Dora, Dotheboys, Dodger; and is not Dickens's choice of Chapman and Hall (his quarrel with the firm is responsible for *The Christmas Carol*) due to the vowel sound in Chap? Mr. Kingsmill's simplicity is shown at his worst in his enthusiastic acceptance of the story that Ellen Ternan, the actress, was Dickens's mistress. She may have been: but all the evidence Mr. Kingsmill has is that Mr. Thomas Wright says that Canon Benham told him that Ellen Ternan had told that clergyman the truth about her relation-

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ship with Dickens. But did Ellen Ternan speak the truth? Such a question does not occur to Mr. Kingsmill.

PEACE WITH HONOUR. An Enquiry into the War Convention. By A. A. MILNE. Methuen. 5s.

CHALLENGE TO DEATH. A Symposium on Peace and War. By FIFTEEN WRITERS, with a Foreword by VISCOUNT CECIL. Constable. 5s.

PACIFICISTS mustn't fall out, but to be frank Mr. Milne as a missionary for peace is more than a little irritating. He seems unable to escape from the polite thin-bread-and-butter-in-the-suburbs humour of *Punch*. Even when writing about so mighty a tragedy as war he cannot forget that he is a professional humorist. Such pretty little jokes about cook and mistress, or courage and crossing Piccadilly Circus! Do look round and have a cup of China tea and a nice chat about Peace. I mean, I think Peace is Awfully Important, don't you?

If everybody in Europe thought as I do, there would be no more war in Europe. If a few important people thought as I do: if Ramsey Macdonald were Milne, and Mussolini were Milne, and Stalin were Milne, and Hitler were Milne, and anybody who might at any moment be in a French Cabinet [enchanted little dig at French political instability, what?] were Milne: then, however intolerable the prospect in other ways, there would be no more war in Europe. If Beaverbrook were Milne and Rothermere were Milne, and the proprietors of fifty chosen newspapers in Europe were Milne, there would be no more war in Europe. If only the Pope were Milne, and the Archbishop of Canterbury were Milne, then it is at least possible that there would be no more war in Europe.

For those who like this sort of thing it is, no doubt, admirable. For ourselves we find its archness nauseating. This, indeed, is the greatest failure of the book: its incurable frivolity. Mr. Pim keeps on passing by – or rather, worse luck, dropping in.

Its other chief defect is its complacency. Mr. Milne says he is against war, explaining that he thinks war wrong 'as I think cruelty to children wrong, as I think the exploitation of the poor wrong.' But we find nothing in these pages about the wrongness of exploiting the poor (he can plead, justly enough, that this is a book about war, not about poverty, but our criticism still stands), and gradually we acquire a suspicion that his objection to war is somehow connected with feelings of personal discomfort. He is against the exploitation of the poor, but he says nothing about being against the poor themselves, against, that is to say, *the fact of poverty*. The criticism is strictly relevant. For war is only one of a dozen social injustices and stupidities, and one, moreover, which exists largely because of poverty and will remain all the harder to prevent while poverty continues.

His whole approach seems to be summed up in the phrase 'Peace means freedom from war.'

'Does it, by God?' we can imagine many a hungry man exclaiming: 'Then give me war to end such a peace as that!' We have searched through the book to find refutation of this attitude of mind and have entirely failed to discover it. Workers for peace have got to be a good deal more constructive than this if they mean to succeed.

And yet Mr. Milne is on the side of the angels, and the angels cannot have too much support in a world in which the powers that be still appear to believe that God is on the side of the big battalions. His message may touch some who would

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not otherwise be convinced, and if it does that it will have been worth writing.

'Challenge to Death' is a very different affair. Produced by writers who have made a close study of their subjects, it is factual, constructive, and always inspired by the right kind of emotion. Nothing is harder than to write about war with passion, and yet avoid the appeal to panic, war's ally. Many of these authors succeed in this. It is the sort of book that is impossible to review adequately short of a treatise half its own length. It covers almost every aspect of the war problem, social, political, economic, scientific, public, official, national, international. Mr. Noel Baker writes with knowledge and insight on 'Peace and the Official Mind,' and later contributes two brilliant chapters on the air problem, the second a well-reasoned plea for the now familiar idea of an international air police force. Throughout the book runs the pattern of an international ideal as the only way out. Mr. Vernon Bartlett, Miss Rebecca West, Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton in their own ways each emphasize it. Mr. Ivor Brown has a vigorous chapter on 'War's New Ally, Fascism'; Mr. Gerald Heard brilliantly analyzes the fate of government and ordered society under the pressure of another conflict. One of the most thoughtful and pregnant contributions in the book is Professor Julian Huxley on 'Peace Through Science.' Both of Miss Storm Jameson's chapters are first rate, and Mr. Priestley shows characteristic common-sense in his article on 'The Public and the Idea of Peace.' The symposium ends somewhat incongruously with a sonnet sequence, excellent in its sort, by Edmund Blunden. Nobody should overlook this five-shillingworth who wants to have between two covers the gist of what thoughtful people are thinking and saying about the present problem of peace and war.

WAKING WORLD By OLAF STAPLEDON.  
Methuen. 7s. 6d.

THOSE who were sated in early youth with the sociological works of Mr. H. G. Wells, may regard this book with a grave and growing suspicion that it is yet another plan for a clockwork Utopia. It is full of the slick Wellsian phraseology, the facile Wellsian *fiats*. For instance, in the ideal world for which Mr. Stapledon would have us work 'though there are many kinds of persons, and as many persons of each kind as are needed for the world's full living, there will not be too many of any kind.' No means, of course, are indicated to this convenient end.

Again, there is the same vague and dogmatic sketch of history, interpreted here, it is true, in terms of economics instead of biology, but vibrant with the same forceful inaccuracy. Thus: 'In the seventeenth century a new class rose to power, namely, the commercial and industrial masters; and owing to the needs and circumstances of this class, religion and morals had to be refashioned.' A reference to dates shows that the new doctrines in religion preceded by more than a century the changes in economic structure; a reference to persons, that Wyclif was a don, Luther a monk of peasant stock, and Calvin an ecclesiastic, the son of a feudal tax-collector – none of them dependent either for a living or for a background upon commerce or industry: and a reference to ordered fact, that it was the stress laid by the Reformers upon the salvation of the individual which broke down the habit of corporate life not only in worship but in action, so that the guild system decayed and the competitive individual traders and manufacturers arose.

Again, purporting to describe the development of religion, Mr. Stapledon *generalizes* the progress of the Jewish conception of God from tribal to universal deity, apparently unconscious of the fact that, far from being typical, this was a

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startling variation from the norm; in accordance with which Roman Europe before the advent of Christianity was settling down to a syncretism as hospitable as that of Hindu India.

The first of these points is cited as an example of the glib unreality which tends to vitiate an otherwise remarkable book: and the second and third are stressed in order to show how deeply enmeshed in the shibboleths of 'advanced' intellectual conventionality a live mind struggles. The theory that history is economically determined: the assumption that the growth of religion can be plotted like a graph: the idea that belief in God is mentally dowdy, and the practice of ornamenting His Name with deprecating inverted commas: the axiom that human immortality is 'a charming fairy-tale' (what about the emotionless and amazing work of J. W. Dunne?): these dogmas have both formed and bound that mind. Occasionally, with enormous cautious strength, it frees itself; and, setting forth the methods of its escape from bondage, shows other prisoners the way to liberty. Mr. Stapledon warns us that science threatens to 'subject the peoples to the tyranny of a scientifically minded ruling caste' and to 'produce at best not world civilization but world mechanization.' He argues, at some length, that Man is more than a cunning animal, even though 'every human act could theoretically be analysed into a tissue of animal impulses, much as a painting may be analysed into a tissue of "brush-strokes" of different sizes and shapes and colours.' He even admits the possible validity of the mystical intuition.

His aim is the establishment of a World-State: not as an end in itself, a safe, comfortable, antiseptic Zoo for the human race, but as a means to the 'awakening' of every individual to an extreme consciousness of art, science, philosophy – and of that inexplicable religious experience which he calls 'delight in fate.' In con-

nection with this ideal of heightened consciousness he surveys each field of human knowledge, and its cultivation in the past and in the present.

To achieve the World-State he advocates economic revolution – violent if need be – absolute pacificism in any nationalistic war, freedom of speech, democratic government, and educational reform: a collection of mutually contradictory methods.

He realizes that fear, humanity-worship, and enlightened self interest are motives alike inadequate to inspire men with 'the world-aim': and substitutes for them the 'delight in fate' with its concomitant 'desire to serve what is so deeply admired.' The love of God, in fact, is to be both the means to the Kingdom of Heaven, and its end: (but Mr. Stapledon, though he patronizes Christianity, declares it to be outgrown).

This is an oddly irritating book, vague, factless, generalized, with a glassily smooth surface over which attention slides, unable to get a firm grip: but it should be read.

THE WILFRID WARDS AND THE TRANSITION. I.  
By MAISIE WARD. Sheed and Ward.  
15s.

In this first volume of her history of the lives and times of her parents, Mrs. Sheed shows herself to possess in a marked degree her father's exceptional talent for biography. For Wilfrid Ward's achievement in this respect had a quite special and individual value. Any competent journeyman of letters with access to sufficient materials can write some sort of more or less readable biography of anyone, but it is a long way from such books to Ward's *Wiseman*, or his life of his father, or his *Newman*. Such works as these are not written merely *ad narrandum*, they are of sympathetic insight and power of interpretation, they are very much more and other than faithful

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chronicles. That, of course, they have to be, but such fidelity to material fact may be considered rather as a necessary preliminary to than as an essential factor of their success. And these remarks have a definite application to the book under consideration.

All the more so that the method of composition adopted by Mrs. Sheed might at first sight seem hardly calculated to produce the 'dramatic' unity which, as a matter of fact, she attains. Wilfrid Ward was writing his reminiscences when he died and only some of the chapters were complete. Five of these are here printed entire, and other incomplete portions are intercalated under the heading of 'Wilfrid Ward's Reminiscences' at relevant points in the text of the author's narrative. It would have been easy to predict a certain effect of patchwork, of incoherence. Such a prediction would have been quite false. Mrs. Sheed has so completely worked herself into her father's mind and point of view, that her 'Narrative' and his 'Reminiscences' fuse perfectly, so perfectly indeed that one has sometimes to look back a page or two to see which of them one is actually reading, and this surely represents a triumph of insight and interpretation.

In her first chapter, 'Background for Wilfrid Ward,' Mrs. Sheed gives a brief sketch of the history of the Ward family, and in particular of the personality and character of her grandfather, W. G. Ward. As she rightly says, it is impossible duly to appreciate Wilfrid's reminiscences of his own childhood without some understanding of his father. He was a formidable and fascinating figure, a 'combination of Socrates and Falstaff,' or as he put it himself (no doubt with a Homeric laugh), 'the mind of an archangel in the body of a rhinoceros.' He was 'the *enfant terrible* of the Oxford Movement.' Except Newman, he was the only one among the Tractarians possessed of a

really philosophic mind. His nimble and subtle intellect delighted in paradox, apparent and even real, and he loved to push theories to their extreme consequences. His mind could never have been permanently at home in the Church of England, and it was natural that in Catholicism he should ally himself with those elements that sought on every occasion and at all costs to extend the sphere and consolidate the power of the central authority. Wilfrid Ward was in later years to react from this teaching, but during his childhood and adolescence his mind was inevitably soaked in his father's essentially abstract view of things. Writing of his father's mentality, he says truly in the first chapter of his *Reminiscences* :

The Catholic Church was to the end far more closely present to him as an embodiment of abstract principles of right and truth than as a real institution with its practical shortcomings visible both in history and in its present action and constitution. . . . His eye for what was going on around him was not at all keen. The world in which his truest life was lived consisted in his own highly developed conscience and his dream of the Church. But this was for him no world of unpractical day-dreaming. His practical life was based on contact with this ideal world just as the practical life of more ordinary persons is determined by contact with their visible surroundings. . . . His whole life was a complete translation of his beliefs into action.

It is not surprising that his consistent absorption in the ideal world, so much more real to him than his material environment, 'prevented his understanding me where my needs differed from his.' But though there was obviously friction, and, as has been said, reaction, there can be no doubt that it was from his father that Wilfrid Ward got the spiritual and



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ethical ideals which actuated him throughout his life. W. G. Ward could only with difficulty bring himself to take any interest in facts as such, or even in their relevance, if any, to mental processes; Wilfrid Ward was born into a world in which facts were becoming all-important. This was the difference between them, not in purity of intellectual motive, or in that kind of self-devotion to Truth and Goodness which we call religion, but solely in environment.

'When first planning this book I thought of it simply as a portrait gallery.' With these words Mrs. Sheed opens her introduction. And a wonderful portrait gallery it is. Wilfrid Ward must have been one of the best 'mixers' who ever lived. His remarkable taste and ability in dramatic and musical matters, the wide range of his intellectual interests helped him to be the perfect 'liaison officer, one who links together, by his knowledge, sympathy and wisdom, many who would otherwise be apart,' as Sir Michael Sadler wrote in a letter to Mrs. Wilfrid Ward. Deeper than all these attractive qualities was what Mrs. Sheed aptly calls 'the essence of his talent . . . an overmastering interest in the workings of other men's minds.' This fundamental characteristic led to many intimate friendships outside the world of his upbringing, with Tennyson, Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, George Wyndham and many others, and to his foundation of the Synthetic Society with the co-operation of Arthur Balfour, Dr. Gore and Dr. Talbot. Two chapters: 'Anglican Orders' and 'A Man of Affairs of the Intellect' develop in detail his views on ecclesiastical policy in the last century, and are of the highest interest, throwing as they do much light on the gradual and uphill growth of the idea of Catholicism in the modern English mind. Of all this there would be much to say, did space permit. Nor should we overlook the charming character-study of her mother, both in her early days at Heron's Ghyll

and Arundel under the tutelage of her grandmother, Minna Duchess of Norfolk, herself sketched incisively and unforgettably, and later as Wilfred Ward's mental comrade and devoted wife, which Mrs. Sheed gives us. No reader with a proper sense of the past and its importance can fail to find this a fascinating book, or refrain from pleased expectation at the thought of the volume which is to follow it.

STARS WERE BORN. By BARBARA LUCAS.  
Constable. 7s. 6d.

FONTAMARA. By IGNAZIO SILONE. Methuen. 7s. 6d.

PRIVATE WORLDS. By PHYLLIS BOTTOME.  
Lane. 7s. 6d.

VOYAGE IN THE DARK. By JEAN RHYS.  
Constable. 5s.

HORNET'S NEST. By HELEN ASHTON Golancz. 7s. 6d.

BARBARA LUCAS writes like a delicate breeze, fresh beyond credence, waywardly tossing old things into new shapes. In *Stars Were Born* she tells of two sisters, Petra and Domenica, whose artist father is querulous, affected and contemptible; the mother, a painter who relinquished her gifts to bear children, is faded and overdriven cook to the erratic family. The sisters promise each other that they will nurture the gifts which they too have and so escape their mother's effacement. But Petra marries and her babies can be called excuses for not writing. Domenica loves with the virgin ardour of sixteen, and stricken, when her love is disregarded, she gives away her 'cello and becomes an artist of promiscuity. So the story is of the exquisite creative sentience of feminine youth that evades training, yet which is too wild and real to be ever wholly stilled or wholly forgotten in flight. It is a subject which sets women's nerves jangling in heartfelt speculation, while men offer a

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downright solution that indicates a certain bewilderment. For Miss Lucas it proves a perfect opportunity. The sophistication and incalculable intensities of Petra and Domenica are so sharply natural that one seems to have been caught up in a scamper of Dryads and Satyrs. Miss Lucas is but twenty-one years old, and her pristine unexpectedness and complete ease are enchanting. Many a recent book has won success by the merit of its inconsequent conversation, but the back chat of Miss Lucas is iridescent. If the acts of her sisters are frequently fantastic it is but a proof the more that all the best fiction now deals with the irrational, so that if it is true that nature copies art the future may show us the reunion of the dismembered god.

*Fontamara* makes a sharp, almost a violent impression, but one comes to question the legitimacy of the means by which the impression is made. It is an account of an Italian village where the peasants are pitifully poor. As though the extreme rigour of poverty was not wrong enough they are cruelly exploited and fooled by local opportunists. The ignorance of the villagers is profound and they are helpless in the hands of these tricky officials. The Fascist movement adds to their sorrows. They sign papers they do not understand and lose their rights, or they protest and are denounced as rebels. Blackshirts arrive to intimidate them with a little shooting and raping. The men of the village are carried off in a lorry and told when to cheer, only to find that their cheers were taken as acquiescence in further taxation and reductions of the already inadequate wages. The story is harrowing, and it is told with that peculiar Latin relish for denudation. It is as though the author would lick his lips at ugliness if his lips were not already weary of being licked for that reason. The brutal practical joking has something mediæval in its coarse clowning. Because tyrannies

take on the glamour of distance this book will make terrible and most salutary reading. If it is taken as the mechanism of law and power seen through the eyes of the for ever violated peasant, then none of its heartbreaking truth should be minimized. But if it is meant or accepted, and there are indications of both, as an exposure of Fascism, then one must qualify one's acceptance. Senor Silone draws Italians who use their dramatic instinct to lay bare the vulnerability of their opponents. They combine their vociferous emotion and innate cynicism to fool the trusting, until the inevitability with which the characters use their wits to befog the issue makes one come to feel that the author has to a certain extent done the same by the reader. The position of the peasants is indeed unbearable, and the Fascist brutalities as told in this book are both shameful and wanton, yet one must stand out against the wiles of Senor Silone and note that the trickery of the lawyers and of the podesta was not the result of Fascism any more than was the callousness of the Ducal landlord.

*Private Worlds* has an absorbing subject treated with great clarity – insanity and sanity and the shifting line which divides the two. The scene is a modern mental hospital in the Midlands, and the characters are young psychiatrists and their patients. It is reassuring to know that some mental hospitals are run on such enlightened lines. The logic of insanity is described in the most illuminating manner, and the efforts of the young doctors, who include a woman, to keep their reactions to each other clear and harmonious is entirely engrossing. The writing is somewhat uneven, as descriptions of scenery, houses and personal beauty verge on the sentimental. When Miss Bottome deals with the intricacies of human thought, and this is the major part of the book, she is adroit and incisive. The story is interesting and moves with

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briskness through a stirring variety of incident ; but the excitement lies, and excitement is what any reader must feel, in the far-reaching clarification it provides. The point of view from which Miss Bottome writes is based on a will to order which liberates precisely because it allows a place for disorder. So much fiction, and so terrifying an amount of autobiography, is based on pride in contortion. We hear so often a cry of naive vanity saying, 'Who can be as incomprehensible as I? Quail before my compulsions, and do not fail to note that the thing I so tenderly nurture is a genuine perversion!' After such exhibitionism it is exhilarating to have *Private Worlds* remind us how profoundly moral the aims of modern psychologists are. By creating an atmosphere of honesty, unity and modesty they again make the air fit to breathe.

Miss Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* is a story of a minus quantity. A hero or heroine used to be a person with a special quality that drew important events to them. Nowadays they may be honoured by an author because they have no aptitude for living. The choice is sometimes justified by the treatment, and Miss Rhys has such genuine gifts that one must respect her workmanship. Her spare style makes every word apt evidence and her descriptions are as literally convincing as photographs. There is no denying though that her heroine is moving because her existence is so faint a thing. She is without parents, money or health ; brought up in the West Indies, she shivers miserably in a theatrical boarding-house where her needs attract a man of wealth. For a time he summons her to be loved, urges her to 'get on' in the world, and offers to help her, but she cannot 'get on' and knows it. He tires of her and ends their relationship. It sweeps her world bare but she cannot utter any word that would hold him a little longer. She has casual relationships, endures an abortion, and one sees the

squalid years that lie before her. The soft, indolent naturalness of the West Indian background is most delicately done, and Miss Rhys has such complete lack of falsity, such a sharp, stark view, that she makes this account of nullity gravely arresting.

Miss Helen Ashton has written another of her competent novels in *Hornet's Nest*. A mother who for years has never had a meal without being tired before she sat at table, and who then always jumped up frequently for things forgotten, who, because of her fussy self-forgetfulness, has never rested, is driven by nervous indigestion to the one titled doctor in their small country town. He is ageing, desiccated, and intimidating, but so suave, so elegant, that when he decides to operate for appendicitis in three days time, with habitual subservience she stills her panic and surprise. Her own doctor is vacillating and evades diagnosis, though knowing Sir Robert to be a bungler and his nursing home ill-kept. The young assistant, fresh from London, maintains that the appendix is healthy and the patient merely suffering from nervous fatigue. The operation is performed and the appendix is found to be fairly normal. Sir Robert is flustered, maladroit and he leaves a swab in the wound. Eventually the young assistant has to perform a second operation in order to remove the swab. All this may sound the sort of thing that is only interesting to the sufferer, but Miss Ashton is extremely clever in presenting the self-doubts of doctors and in showing how their prides and timidities affect their patients. The amount she knows about operations—but how do our women novelists know all they know? The doctors and nurses are so well drawn that anyone who has ever been in a nursing home will feel a wicked relish in the early chapters. It is all interesting and lively as long as the swab remains in that weary, uncomplaining woman. But unfortunately the swab comes out too soon

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for the book's good, and afterwards there are pages of chatter from small town bores who make much ado about the swab scandal, and the love affair of Sir Robert's pretty granddaughter with the capable young surgeon. But these bores are bores, and girls who are only pretty have become so plentiful that reviewer's panic sets in at the first sentence beginning, 'Her calm and classic features——' It was unkind of Miss Ashton to begin so well only to abandon us in a desert of print.

A FOX-HUNTER'S ANTHOLOGY. Compiled by PETER LEWIS. Dickson. 15s.

AMID the authors who sing the praises of hunting in this excellent anthology, Juliana Berners utters a discordant croak. The hunter, she declares, 'blowyth tyll his lypyes blyster, and whan he wenyth it be an hare, full oft it is an hegge hogge. Thus he chasyth and wote not what. He comyth home at cy en ray n beten, pryckyd, and his clothes torne, were shode all myry, some hounde lost, some surbat (lame).' To-day, some 400 years later, the hedgehog is not among the major deceptions that await the hunter, but the hedge remains and so do the mire and the rain – which, of course, is largely the fun of it. Perhaps Dame Juliana had not read *Master of Game*, by Edward Duke of York (c. 1400, as Mr. Lewis informs us), who summed up the joys of hunting more perfectly than any man before or since, and did not even forget the hot bath at the end of the day. 'And when he has come home,' he insists, the hunter 'shall doff his clothes and his shoes and his hose, and he shall wash his thighs and his legs, and peradventure all his body.' He was a gallant Duke of York, despite that 'peradventure,' and he is responsible for the most notable passage of prose in this book:

'A hound is true to his lord and his master, and of good love and true. A hound is of great understanding and of great goodness, a hound is a wise beast

and a kind one. A hound has a great memory and great smelling, a hound has great diligence and great might, a hound is of great worthiness and of great subtlety, a hound is of great lightness and of great perseverance, a hound is of good obedience, for he will learn as a man all that a man will teach him.'

Mr. Lewis's authors range in time from Homer to Siegfried Sassoon and in skill from Shakespeare to – shall one brave the fury of the Shires and say Whyte-Melville? Perhaps Mr. Lewis would support one here, for he has included only one extract by the author of *Holmby House*, and that the best possible extract from *Holmby House* itself. But if Whyte-Melville is to be put at or near the bottom of the scale, how unexpected a quantity of good prose has been written about fox-hunting! Surtees is generously displayed in this selection, and Peter Beckford, Squire Osbaldeston, 'Nimrod,' Kingsley and Tom Smith are well represented. All were good honest Englishmen who wrote good honest English on a sport which they knew inside out, and to turn to any of these extracts after an intensive reading of modern 'psychological' fiction is to turn with relief to cold beef, salad and bread-and-butter after a prolonged diet of over-elaborate foreign kickshaws.

Mr. Lewis has diversified this plain and wholesome fare with many attractive trifles. Oscar Wilde speaks again of 'the English country gentleman galloping after a fox – the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable', and Mrs. Piozzi of Dr. Johnson: 'He certainly rode on Mr. Thrall's old hunter with a good grimness, and though he would follow the hounds fifty miles on end sometimes, would never own himself either tired or amused.' That pertinacious hound (Scotch, of course) who followed a fox for four days over seventy miles of country – without making any Allowances for Doubles, Crosses, and Tergiversations – receives his

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due; and Gervase Markham (1568-1637) tells how a pack can be tuned like a peal of bells with 'a couple or two of small single beagles' to 'warble' as trebles. Mr. Lewis shows his discretion by including among the verse only a few inches from the yards of 'poetry' written by that crashing bore William Somerville, so much beloved by our fox-hunting ancestors, and by printing in full *The Old Squire* by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Had he roamed awhile in the Celtic twilight with 'Caolte, and Conan, and Bran, Sceolan, Lomair' he might have found good hunting, but one Irish saga is given in its entirety – the superb run with Flurry's hounds made by old Mrs. Knox in her bathchair – and there should be no complaints about omissions where an anthologist has ranged so far with so sure and subtle a literary discrimination.

The book is illustrated with five hunting pictures selected by Mr. Geoffrey Agnew, who also contributes some useful notes on art in the hunting field. For the sake of these illustrations one could have wished the volume had a larger page; but the book is beautifully produced.

THE JASMINE FARM. By THE AUTHOR of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

HEAVEN'S MY DESTINATION. By THORNTON WILDER. Longmans. 7s. 6d.

WINTER'S YOUTH. By JOHN GLOAG. Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.

HOW LIKE AN ANGEL. By A. G. MACDONNELL. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

THE DEMON IN THE HOUSE. By ANGELA THIRKELL. Hamish Hamilton. 7s. 6d.

THE BUBBLE. By GERALD BULLETT. Dent. 2s. 6d.

FISBO. By ROBERT NICHOLS. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

MOUNT PEACOCK. By MARIE MAURON. Cambridge University Press. 6s.

IN so many ways unlike the late Mr. Thomas Carlyle, 'Elizabeth' shares that

sage's opinion on the undue predominance of fools. Only she enjoys her fools, and makes us enjoy them, even if she is a trifle indifferent to what they feel about her or our enjoyment. In most of her books the worst fools are the men; and *The Jasmine Farm* marks a new departure in that it does not count, among its major characters, a single woman of any sense at all. The story opens with an epic gravity of movement (a movement due chiefly to indigestible gooseberries) at a house-party at Lady Midhurst's. To be invited to Shillerton is a certificate of respectability: and this party consists of old friends, and one exception: Mrs. Andrew Leigh. Everyone knew Andrew, a dull, rather dry fellow, who for years has helped Lady Midhurst in managing her property – for a strict morality is no aid to arithmetic, especially when it comes to calculating super-tax. Mrs. Leigh, is however, new to all there, except her husband. She is dazzlingly beautiful, and deplorably common: quite out of place at a house-party where one of the guests, as Elizabeth quaintly says (her English still has odd lapses) is 'the daughter of fifteen Dukes.' Why is she there, this Mrs. Andrew? And why has she never been there before? And why is Lady Midhurst, the best of hostesses, so hopelessly negligent this weekend, that all her guests have a surfeit of gooseberries and belly-aches? There is our story: and in its resolution Elizabeth has given us, if not her best, something better than anyone else could contrive. It is a delightful book – witty, at moments deliciously vulgar, wise, kindly; and in the portrait of Mumsie, Elizabeth has added a masterpiece to her gallery. Andrew, poor fellow, who has watched and been a daily companion to Lady Midhurst's daughter Terence, a girl of Miranda-like innocence, has accepted Terence's love – she eighteen, he near fifty. For years they have lived as man and wife, to her joy and his increasing distress: Lady Midhurst begins

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to suspect the truth, and asks Rosie Leigh to settle her doubts. At first quieted, she learns the truth by accident, and hence follows the strange, enforced intimacy with Rosie's mother, Mrs. de Lacy, 'Belle de Lacy if you want it full, just Mumsie if you want it pet', as that gallant old schemer announces to Count von Vosch. Daisy Midhurst's flight to Le Clos des Jasmines, where she has spent her one brief time of happiness with her unfaithful husband, Mumsie's pursuit, and the subsequent disentanglement of the several knots are Elizabeth at her best: and masculine readers will be grateful that the one person to keep his head in this tragi-comedy should be that good-natured, if rather vain, politician, Mr. George Torrens.

It will be amusing to see whether Mr. Wilder regains with his new novel the place of honour from which the pundits have sought to eject him since he became 'popular'. It would be a mistake to say *Heaven's my Destination* is better than *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*: the books are not strictly comparable. This new novel, however, is in its way as good as Mr. Wilder's earlier successes, and should have as enthusiastic admirers. It is the story of a good man, of a pious man. George Brush is a 'drummer' for a firm of publishers; he travels in educational books. He has been converted, and is an ardent Christian of the kind represented by William Jennings Bryan. It would be easy to present George Brush as a merely farcical figure: Mr. Wilder has done something finer and more difficult. This strong, handsome, earnest young man, with a gorgeous tenor voice and a passion to bring people to God, is likeable. A bore, tactless, unthinking primitive, he is yet always loveable: and those who cannot bear him fail because something in him reminds them of something lost in themselves, and maddens them to fury. He is a stupid angel, pathetically anxious to serve, pathetically sure that he has the

truth. The best scene in a book where every page is a delight is that where he is tried for some offences before a country judge who can appreciate the poor fellow's excellent intentions. Only the simple and the wise can understand George Brush; only the patient can put up with him: and it is through his affection for an old Popish priest, whom he scarcely knows, that Brush regains his assurance and his faith, after the failure of his marriage. Brother Juniper must have been such a man as Brush, and Mr. Wilder must be congratulated on his success in portraying simple goodness so that it has charm as well as verisimilitude.

Mr. Gloag's world is of wit rather than humour. He is a satirist, and of fine quality. He imagines a world – some years on from to-day – in which the Foreign Secretary, Lord Privilege, becomes aware of a new method of rejuvenation. What is to be done with this dangerous gift? With cutting irony, and occasionally savage and sardonic power, Mr. Gloag describes the result of the discovery and its 'release' to certain people. A new war between old and young springs up, a new sort of conflict between possessors and the poor. There are now again two political parties in the country: Privilege, belonging to the old Progressive-Nationalist party, is trusted by the revolutionaries who are determined to get power, in spite of the Government's unscrupulous use of the Incitement to Disaffection Act (1941). The revolutionaries, when the Press is closed to them, advertize – and no one dares touch the advertisement columns. Mr. Gloag is sometimes too crude in his satire; but he has written a lively, entertaining book.

Mr. Macdonnell and Mrs. Thirkell aim at lighter game, but with as sure a precision. Mr. Macdonnell's nationless hero (he has been brought up on a desert island by three fellow ship-wrecked missionaries, English, French and German)

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when rescued is doomed, by an odd resemblance to a Hollywood actor, to enter as a citizen of the silver screen-land. His mishaps there give Mr. Macdonnell much opportunity for pleasant farce, and gay laughter at the life behind that screen, where those who move and groan are no more human than their flickering representations. It is all good fun but rather more removed from life than the fun in *England then England*. Mrs. Thirkell's volume about that plague of a little boy, Tony Morland, has a most distressing verisimilitude. No man can read it, if he be honest, without recalling his own capabilities of being tiresome to his elders, no woman without wondering at her sex's miraculous patience with the blunt-headed pertinacity of the human male. Here is Tony on holiday, boasting, questioning, complaining – Tony, with his high spirits and profound grievances. Tony bullying the girls and patronizing his old and faithful friend Donk. He is the best boy in fiction since Mr. Walpole's Jeremy, and Mrs. Thirkell has none of Mr. Walpole's desperately avuncular conviction that grown-ups know better than the boy what is good for the boy: her Mrs. Morland is content to know – and oh! how justly – what is more convenient for mothers.

How welcome is the return of verse satire! It has of late been far too infrequent, and most who have attempted it have had neither dexterity to wing their darts, nor conviction to cloke their hate – they have written merely from some petty personal grievance. Mr. Bullett and Mr. Nichols are of different calibre. Mr. Bullett is genial, less serious, altogether lighter in his attack: he uses the net, and lets his victims enmesh themselves. Publishers, reviewers, 'puffs' and literary pretensions form the subject of his Muse, and a lively, gay line admirably expresses his amused contempt. Mr. Nichols' *Fisbo* is a satire about a satirist – one may guess

who and which. In the first book the poet and his Muse visit Fisbo, disgruntled after a libel action, and the Muse's looking-glass is changed for Fisbo's. In its clear surface we are shown Fisbo's horrid career. Here is Fisbo enjoying a visit from Max S. Fitzgammon, a publicity agent.

'Do you care for dogs? No, not particularly?

I fear we must change that, "Love my dog, love me."

A retriever's good and so is a red setter,  
The woollier sort of dog is even better –  
As more *en rapport* with the English mind.  
Procure the woolliest dog that you can find.

Do you object to being photographed?  
Not at all? Good: our labour's more than halved.

For, as the singer of our modern youth  
Says with such force, such beauty and such truth,

"A nose is a nose is a nose is a nose."

And yours should tell – and will – in every pose.'

There are many shrewd hits at some of our most blown-up reputations, and the whole satire is a fine protest against the degradation which art suffers from the charlatan the pedant and the puritan.

Few books so delightful as *Mount Peacock* come the reviewer's way. Translated, with a sensitive and shrewd introduction by Mr. F. L. Lucas from the as yet unpublished French original, Mme. Mauron's book will fascinate all who know the Midi, and charm those who do not, to visit that lovely, free, entrancing country where, centuries ago, the three Maries started on their evangelistic work. Here is a book to put beside Daudet's Tarascon volume: and a book, in many ways, better than Daudet's. The chapter on the inspection, by the military, of Mount Pâon's stock of horses, mules and asses is one of the liveliest bits of rural comedy that has appeared for years. On every

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page the author catches the warm, tolerant beneficent atmosphere of Provence, a country where, as Mr. Lucas claims, the present conflict between mechanization and man, between the mass and the individual is still always decided in favour of man.

PRINCE RUPERT. By JAMES CLEUGH. Bles. 10s. 6d.

PRINCE RUPERT THE CAVALIER. By GLEN-  
NELL WILKINSON. Harlap. 8s. 6d.

FEW literary phenomena are odder than the fashion in which simultaneous biographies appear of some historical figure who has not been written about at length for perhaps a generation. Here are two now, and good ones, of Prince Rupert, nephew of Charles I, uncle of George I, and son of Elizabeth Stewart, 'Queen of Hearts,' and of her well-meaning, upright, slightly ridiculous husband, the Winter King of Bohemia. Everyone knows that Rupert fought for his uncle in the Civil War and was a cavalry leader of flashing brilliance: most people who know anything of the period know that he had the Stewart taste for science and art, made innovations of some note in both, and at some time or other was a privateer. But his place in popular history is vague, and many readers, even among those who have some acquaintance with the seventeenth century, will learn with surprise that although he lived to be sixty-three, he was only twenty-two when his uncle's standard was raised, and blown down by the storm, at Nottingham.

Yet he is worth knowing much more about. The House of Stewart, even the less colourful junior branch of it, the Lennox Stewarts of the Double Throne, was rich in vivid personalities, and his is among the most vivid of them all: Stewart he was, like most of his mother's children. Both Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Cleugh call him more English than German: more

Stewart than German is a truer phrase, for the Stewarts – it was one of the things that made their difficulties – were never English, though most of the later ones (and Rupert was no exception) loved England. His mother was born a Princess of Scotland, half Scandinavian, her father son of the heiress of the old brilliant royal line and of the heir of the Lennox-D'Aubigny house, as much French as Scots. It would be hardly too much to see in him a type of the wandering Scots professional soldier in whom his age is peculiarly rich. The greater part of his career was one long adventure: he was born during his father's brief kingship at Prague, and had his first taste of war at the age of one, when he was only just saved from being left behind in the hasty flight of that evanescent court. His youth was spent in the scrambling and penniless exile that at some time or other was the lot of almost every Stewart after the Union. He managed to pick up an education, speaking seven languages when he was thirteen, took a keen and sensitive delight in the arts – he was a black-and-white artist of considerable quality himself – and like his cousin, Charles II, was interested also in the new sciences: his main interest, however, was soldiering. He grew up a young man of striking personality, a fine figure of six feet four, with a swarthy masculine beauty he never lost, a taste for colour (he loved to go in scarlet) and a sort of self-contained violence in action, guided by a clear brain that thought more of things than of people or ideas. He had few devotions, but they were deep and lasting: those to women were not love-affairs – he had few of those, and the only substantial ones in a lonely middle-age – but warm and chivalrous friendships, such as that with the charming Duchess of Richmond. His chief affections were for his brother Maurice and uncle Charles; and it is by his service to the latter that his name, as he probably would choose, survives.



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He had seen war already, and with credit. When, at twenty-two, he found himself in command of the royalist horse, he was already a veteran of experience. He used it: his soldier's brain and his unusual gift of sheer leadership made him throw aside the tactics of the day and revert to the mediæval conception of cavalry as essentially shock-troops. His success was such that he became a legend in his early twenties, not least for his enemies. Both his biographers present some amusing material for the student of propagandist journalism, in the contrast between the actual Rupert, stern enough, almost fantastically brave, but a generous opponent and far from brutal, and the necromantic monster of the Puritan press, whose charges went so far as cannibalism. His service was tragic: a squire from Huntingdon proved a better cavalry leader than even Rupert. No man who was not a politician could have kept his feet among the pitiful intrigues of Charles's wandering court, and the uncle he loved never really forgave him the surrender of Bristol, though no experienced soldier blamed him for it.

Mr. Wilkinson's book deals with Rupert the Cavalier, and concerns itself almost wholly with these wars: his description of them is admirable. One could have wished the excellent illustrations had included more battle-maps, but his account of the actions is really good. Mr. Cleugh takes this period in less detail, but goes wider, with an account of Rupert's foreign service, his years as Admiral, and his life in England after the Restoration, as a stately, scholarly, and lonely survivor from an age that understood him better. The two biographers have a differing outlook. Mr. Wilkinson finds Rupert 'the more natural beast of the twain': in fact it is a little amusing at times to see Mr. Cleugh's more fashionable preconceptions a little perplexed, as in dealing with Rupert's friendships, by the facts he is too

honest not to see. It says a good deal for both gentlemen that Rupert comes alive in the work of both, and that his vivid personality shows precisely the same through the two different treatments. Both authors have earned commendation: not so Messrs. Bles. Their book is the more expensive of the two, but the noble Lely portrait – even Lely could not vulgarize Prince Rupert – is travestied, and the Louvre Honthorst has lost its sensitive facial modelling. A good biography deserves good plates.

DANTE VIVO. By GIOVANNI PAPINI. Lovat Dickson. 12s. 6d.

CARLYLE wrote: 'Many volumes have been written by way of commentary on Dante and his Book; yet, on the whole, with no great result. His biography is, as it were, irrecoverably lost for us. An unimportant, wandering, sorrow-stricken man, not much note was taken of him while he lived; and the most of that has vanished, in the long space that now intervenes. It is five centuries since he ceased writing and living here. After all commentaries, the Book itself is mainly what we know of him.'

This will seem scanty praise with which to preface a review of a new life of Dante. Perhaps it helps to explain, however, the method of Giovanni Papini in *Dante Vivo*. For this is not so much a 'life' of Dante (though it follows the chronological sequence of the events in his life) as 'an untrammelled and dispassionate investigation of the secret soul of the divine Poet.' Although we may be somewhat at a loss to know how such enquiry *can* be 'untrammelled and dispassionate,' we see, at any rate, at the outset, that we are to go more along the lines of an essayist like Carlyle (whom Giovanni Papini does not seem to admire) than the more restricted path of conventional biography.

There is a foreword for English

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readers in which Papini claims 'a kind of fore-ordained harmony between the Anglo-Saxon culture and my own mind.' Nevertheless, *Dante Vivo* will recall to readers over here another culture and another flow of thought than they are used to. Papini heads his chapters 'Our Brother' (*i.e.*, Dante is a man with high and brute instincts like ourselves, as well as lofty poet), 'The Disdainful Friend,' 'Dante, a Sinner,' 'The Tearful Poet,' and so on; some titles, however, reading more simply, less rhetorically, than these given above. The English reader will therefore move with a little natural trepidation among a sequence of exhortations and laudations woven into the structure of dates and plain fact which Papini cites – and cites apparently with quite unusual grasp of the authorities on Dante. What must be criticized in a book of this kind, that relies on a blend of academic knowledge and naive adoration of the man written about, is its lack of direction: where are we going? This, anyway, is a very insistent question rising in us as we leave 'Dante, the Sorcerer,' without being able to remember what he brewed or what men he enchanted, for 'The Dead Restored to Life,' where after an hour the dead in question are really only abstract words – the words of the chapter-heading itself – to us.

'That he was not always the proud oak tree but was sometimes the weeping-willow, only serves to bring him the closer to our own humanness,' writes Papini at the end of the chapter called 'The Tearful Poet.' May we not doubt it? Surely of all kinds of poet the weeping-willow kind is the least endurable. And to describe Dante, of all poets, as a weeping-willow, is to excel in the inappropriate. No, Dante was compassionate, tender-hearted, or what you like that is vulnerable to human suffering – and we are sure Papini, like Carlyle and now Mr. Eliot, is aware of it – but he never was a tearful poet weeping in the streams of self-pity.

### SOME BOOKS FOR GIFTS

THIS is a capricious selection. Only one consideration has governed the list: it contains no book which would not be better kept than given away, no book which the judicious donor will not be at pains to replace. So if flaws be pointed out in any, the indication springs from affection, from a wish that so pleasant a thing were a little better. It has been a winter thick with anthologies – most of them excellent. There is *Sea Sequel* (Nonesuch Press, 6s.), in which the editors of *The Week-End Book* (with Marion Coates) take their clients aboard. Notoriously it is more difficult to pack for a sea-voyage, and there are some gaps in this valise. The most serious is the absence of Captain Marryat; almost as grievous is the omission of F. J. Bullen, and how well, in one section, would have fitted Booth Tarkington's earth-quaking description of sea-sickness from *The Plutocrat*! Is it modern nicety that excludes Gilbert's *Wreck of the Nancy Brig*? The book on the whole exhibits the same industry and ingenuity as its predecessor: the account of the loss of the *Titanic* is a real treasure; but Lady Rhondda's account of the sinking of the *Lusitania* is more vivid and personal than the one given here. Mr. Arthur Stanley's *The Fireside Book* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.) is a volume of 900 pages, in which Mr. Stanley gives us the freedom of his library in selections larger and more diversified than in most anthologies. This book ranges easily from serious to gay, from old to modern, and if its plan seems a little vague, that renders it free of criticism for missing a more definite objective. Such an objective is very well attained by Mr. Gerald Bullett in *The Pattern of Courtesy* (Dent, 5s.), in which those who cannot share the compiler's view that mysticism can exist without God may nevertheless find great profit. The book is a tribute to the validity of wonder. Miss Yvonne French's *News from the Past*

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(Gollancz, 7s. 6d.) is a history, by newspaper extracts, of the nineteenth century up to 1887. It is full of entertainment; and the author's predilections are shown by her omissions as well as by her inclusions. Regrettably the book has one of the worst indexes possible: name after name, found in the text, are not to be discovered in that generally useful appendage; it would have been better, too, to exclude illustrations if they could not, at the book's low price, have been better reproduced. The Du Maurier on p. 549 is enough to give Mr. Punch a second hump.

The excessive 'blurb' is always a mistake: such a sentence as 'If you ask any editor or author "Who is England's cleverest woman writer?" the answer will undoubtedly be "Rebecca West".' is simply untrue: 'Elizabeth', Rose Macaulay, E. M. Delafield immediately come to mind. Powerful as is much of Rebecca West's commentary to David Low's *The Modern Rake's Progress* (Hutchinson, 8s. 6d.), it is often too direct in its homiletic. Low's series of twelve double-page coloured plates are full not only of his accustomed malice, but of a beauty and an occasional tenderness which do not appear in his political cartoons. Two books of funny drawings are H. M. Bateman's *Considered Trifles* (Hutchinson, 6s.) and Fougasse's *Fun Fair* (Hutchinson, 9s. 6d.). Fougasse is the funnier and the subtler, whether as draughtsman or humorist; but Mr. Bateman's more violent attack has its own admirers, to whose number this book may add. To those who are leaving England in winter for warmer, sunnier countries there could be no better gift than *Portuguese Somersault* (Harrap, 10s. 6d.), in which Jan and Cora Gordon take one of their famous tours together. They are the best travellers – for they travel for nothing except beauty and enjoyment. They find beauty and present it with pen and pencil; they find enjoyment and share it. For those who

cannot travel, kept at home by work or overdraft, there are two lovely volumes of photographs – Mr. Wickham's *Italian Renaissance* and Mr. F. M. Scott's *Polar Regions* (Chatto and Windus, 5s. each). When the Polar regions have produced an art to come within calling distance of Italian, we may begin to discuss the value of the sunshine to the race of man. For dog-lovers there is, in the same series, *A Book of Dogs*, where may be found a hundred photographs of dogs, ranging from the Great Dane and the Bloodhound to the Pekingese and the Griffin. For those who like something rather creepy at Christmas *The Devil in Scotland* (Maclehose, 8s. 6d.) may be recommended. Here are two stories of Stevenson's, Burns' *Tam o' Shanter* and Scott's *Wandering Willie's Tale*, with fine woodcuts and an introduction by Douglas Percy Bliss. No doubt the witches waited in Scotland because, at Knox's superstitious bidding, that country abandoned the keeping of the Christmas festival.

Mr. Martin Armstrong and Miss Rose Macaulay must have had a very teasing task to decide what pleasures belonged to whose anthology. Miss Macaulay's is called *The Minor Pleasures of Life* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.), and Mr. Armstrong's *The Major Pleasures* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.) – but who can draw the line? There are occasions when eating and drinking – both claimed by Mr. Armstrong – take a very inferior position. Poets have been known to forsake both for art, and lovers frequently postpone their stomachic appetite. Repartee, which falls to Miss Macaulay, may have a most monstrous importance: was it not used by a Roman Governor on the most solemn occasion in our history, and can we not see Pilate's gloating satisfaction at his score? Still, only the most churlish will complain at these two splendid anthologies: only the most unselfish will part from them. I think, however, in future editions Miss Macaulay should have some-

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thing about fret-work and Mr. Armstrong should add Sydney Smith's recipe for mixing a salad. Of the major-minor more expensive pleasures of life, book-collecting is, for the civilized, the best – with picture and print collecting on a level. For those with fair overdrafts there are some fine books this winter. From the Golden Cockerel Press, now at Staple Inn, come Mr. Mottram's *Strawberry Time* (21s.) and *Sermons by Artists* (21s.). Mr. Mottram's book contains two characteristic tales, with engravings by Gertrude Hermer; the sermons are by different authors, including David Low, Will Dyson, Paul Nash, Roger Fry and Robert Gibbings. It is amusing that the last, in an opening diatribe against going to church, should quote a poem by the Jesuit Fr. Hopkins, whom he calls Gerard Manley; but logic and learning are not Mr. Gibbings' strong suit. A book for the specialist is Mr. Ralph Chubb's *The Heavenly Cupid* (the author, Fair Oak, Kingclere, Hants., £5 5s.); it is modelled after Blake's prophetic books, and is not unworthy of the master. Mr. Chubb's philosophy is that of a Joachimite – but is he following that early Franciscan in believing that a new dispensation will come, the Kingdom of the Spirit? His work has imagination: but is rather lacking in the intensity to convey it. A beautiful book from St. Dominic's Press Ditchling, is Fr. McNabb's translation of the *Agathistos* (10s. 6d.), the Greek devotion in honour of Our Lady: this is an excellent example of careful private press work.

Returning to more modestly priced works few prettier gift books could be found than Lady Cynthia Asquith's anthology *She Walks in Beauty* (Heinemann, 6s.), a perfect present from every man to every woman; while, if one is looking for something to give a child most sensible uncles will plump for Miss Lewis' *Tou-Tou the French Poodle* (Constable, 3s. 6d.), where the text, and Mr. J. R. Monsell's

lively and entertaining illustrations are in the most harmonious combination. Lovers of animals and birds will find delight in Mr. E. D. Cuming's *Idlings in Arcadia* (Murray, 10s. 6d.) with its illustrations by that consummate observer of creatures, Mr. J. A. Shepherd. For those who would like to give religious books there are two outstanding volumes. First there is Dr. James' edition of the New Testament (Dent, 5s.), of which the first volume contains the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark. Here, not of course for the first time, the text is printed without the tiresome divisions into chapter and verse; the text is Hague and Gill's Joanna type, and there are two engravings by Eric Gill in the book, and one on the wrapper which is not, but should be, reproduced as a frontispiece. Then there is Mr. Cunliffe Owen's *Before Bethlehem* (Athenæum Press, 4s.) – three sketches of David, John Baptist, and the Virgin Mary, remarkable for their devotional simplicity, decorated characteristically but not very appropriately, by John Farleigh.

### AT THE PLAY

OUR present preoccupation with the thought of war has been reflected in two plays – Mr. C. K. Munro's *Ding & Co.* at the Embassy Theatre and Mr. van Druten's *Flowers of the Forest* at the Whitehall. Mr. van Druten's play reflects too much of our mental confusion, Mr. Munro's too little. Some thirty or more years ago there was a fashion, set by Fiona Macleod, of writing allegories in which the Body, Mind and Soul of man were given separate identities and sent on a journey – none of them getting on very well without the others. Mr. Munro and Mr. van Druten rather echo the consequences of that old psychological division. Mr. Munro – with the exception of one notable scene – speaks to us as if we were only Intelligences; Mr. van

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Druten as if we were only Hearts moved merely by emotion. There is no question that the former is the more respectable appeal and the latter more effective theatre, though it is an error of our times to overvalue the intelligence and undervalue, while over-indulging, the emotions; as a youthful under-graduate haughtily remarked, 'We don't use words like "pity" now at Cambridge.' Mr. van Druten hardly uses any word but pity, but uses it so sincerely that it was very hard luck that his play should have appeared the night after Mr. Munro's. Mr. Munro was endeavouring to express through his characters his conclusions about war; Mr. van Druten was therefore blamed for the ideas expressed by his people, the half-baked modern pacificism of his consumptive clerk, the emotionalism of his poet; but these ideas, or rather, these emotions, were dramatically right for his characters, and, indeed, amounted to little more than the confused and passionate desire which nearly everyone feels that war should cease. Mr. van Druten helped the misapprehension by ending his play with what might be taken as a message from the next world. He has not tried to treat his people as symbols and is not a great enough artist for them to become so in spite of him. Yet the history of his poet-soldier, who enlists in the exaltation of the man willing to die and ends in the terrible bitterness of the man obliged to go on killing – is the history of our times. We are too sensitive for modern war – we cannot be reconciled to doing so much evil that so little good may come. And that disillusion about war has spread – so that not only the ex-soldiers but the post-war generations as well, doubt the value of life itself, since war seems an unavoidable part of it. That life is worth while was Richard's dying realization, and one that we also need. It was not a message from another world, but Richard's last in this.

Mr. van Druten is a dramatist who must have a theme on which he can feel sincerely: so far he seems to have but one – the schoolboy. This is his best and only considerable play since *Young Woodley*; his real plea is that schoolboys shall not be trained, and intended – as they are by some systems – to be slaughtered at seventeen. Life may, truly, be purchased too dearly, it may be 'better to die in some causes than to keep out of them and remain alive,' but the choice should not be forced on those who can yet know so little of either death or life.

Marda Vanne again proved her sterling versatility by her picture of an embittered woman of deep feeling and no imagination. Stephen Haggard's rendering of the intelligent, egotistic, ill-bred, consumptive, heart-breaking young genius with a mediumistic spot in his brain was so good that it was hard to believe that here was an actor of the old type who can seem to *be* a great number of widely differing characters, not the modern actor who is chosen by the producers to go on indefinitely exploiting his own character and temperament.

In spite of our intense interest in its theme and our respect for the honesty of his treatment of it, Mr. Munro's play is a little dull. His people are dramatized ideas on the Shavian model, but Mr. Munro has too little wit and scarcely any of Mr. Shaw's genius for creating comic character. Ding, the lying Cabinet Minister, is a well-written and convincing part. Mr. Munro is scrupulously fair to him and lets him argue his own case, which is, in a word, that we get the statesmen we deserve; that, in his defence of war as the ultimate sanction, Ding expresses what is in our own hearts. The salvation of a country, as was wisely said, is its good men, its ruin its clever men. Ding is the clever man for whom good men die – his evil is that evil of choosing the impermanent present benefit,

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or that which conceals the present evil, instead of the more permanent future good. He always sacrifices the truth and the future to the present, 'controls the look of things that he can't control.'

Miss Catherine Lacey gave an intelligent and imaginative rendering of Hope, the only woman in the play; she rose to heights of real power and force in her attack on Ding. Mr. Torin Thatcher was intensely moving as Lion, the good simple man who goes because the war seems a call to his manhood, whom it leaves with 'everyone finished with Lion,' 'just a burden and an expense.' Mr. Thatcher's voice and acting were of an extreme beauty and dignity.

One of the hardest tasks of the theatre is to establish intimacy and illusion. In simpler days when men and women were direct in intention and movement, when heroic life was naturally admired and every man, if he dreamed, dreamed he was a king, or a vagabond or a saint, wooing or plaguing or saving every woman who, in her dreams, was also heroic – then the theatre shared that simple and splendid atmosphere. Men who sat upon the stage, as near the actors as we are to the programme-girls, were transported to Troy or Illyria, and had no trouble in treading naturally the woods of fairyland or the blasted heath or the ramparts of Elsinore, did the actors bid them come. The illusion was accomplished because the audience was with the players, not the players with the audience. How hardly is that illusion to be had to-day! This last month it could be had perfectly only at one theatre – the Grafton. There Mr. William Simmonds, whose great horses in the Tate Gallery magnificently rebuke a mechanized age, allowed us to occupy for a moment that tiny, miraculous world of his puppets. These children of his are not the cunning counterfeits of actual life: here is reality; and we, the clumsy botched discards of that dainty

world, are given the freedom of its un-failing perfection. As to the notes of virginals and muted violin the curtain rises, there dances before the dark velvet, Harlequin, glittering, graceful, immortal, to be joined soon in that eternal gaiety by Columbine, Pantaloon, Clown, and Ghost Here, to a woodland as intense as the desires of childhood, come the faun, the deer, the hunter, the centaur and the hamadryad. Mr. Simmonds can catch humour, too, in the same web of everlastingness. London workmen, sailors, soldiers, Mother Bunch, the shy young carter, the old, old man who knows that old age, too, goes on for ever, are here for our fancy. In the number called *Mahogany Suite*, the Victorian drawing-room is produced after the pattern laid up in heaven – the very whiskers of the lover have the patina of perpetuity. At once poetry and criticism, this show was the most delightful thing to be seen in London. To sit at it was to be in it; and one could pay one's companion no greater compliment than to see her in the terms of tiny and delicate reality.

*The Moon in the Yellow River* is now at the Haymarket with a cast, alas! not nearly so good as that which appeared at the Westminster. Still, Mr. Johnstone's play is so fine that it should not be missed; and there are still Nan Monro's superb Aunt Columba and William Riley's excellent Willie. Why has English criticism gone so timorous? We used to be the first people to applaud and rejoice in American humour – Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce and Lowell had their fanatics here as soon as, or earlier than, in their own country. It is shocking to find a critic asking that Miss Tonkonogy's *Three-Cornered Moon*, the comedy at the Westminster Theatre should be 'sub-edited for the English market.' Is this Broadway? Shall we tamper with Tarkington, parse anglicanly our Dorothy Parker or lace Ring Lardner with cockney

## Theatre

phrases? Miss Tonkonogy's comedy is excellent fun—it has an air of non-professional gaiety rare in a theatre which borrows the technique of all nations. It is a comedy of the depression. Mrs. Rimplegar has lost the family fortune on 'margin'. So all the Rimplegars have to work—three sons, a daughter and a daughter's beau, a genius in disguise who can do nothing but write his masterpiece and buy his girl flowers with money borrowed from the house-keeping purse. It is played with lightness and speed. Kay Hammond as Miss Rimplegar is exquisitely right—never could one guess so much purpose to lie below near-platinum, so much humour and force to be hidden by that flat, kindly-supercilious voice. The four boys are, in their way and with their less difficult parts, equally good: and Mrs. Rimplegar, who must have had an ancestress who once met Mrs. Nickleby, is superbly and maddeningly acted by Jane Savile.

Messrs. Bridie's and Gurney's *Mary Read*, at His Majesty's, is a fine, full-blooded melodrama with rather inappropriate lapses into psychology. The actual Mary Read was certainly as far removed from this as were her fellow-pirates from the portraits given in those dying speeches composed for them by indigent clergymen in the prison of the Fleet.

The play, often a promise of better things, becomes a mere vehicle for bravura acting, of which Flora Robson, Iris Hoey, Robert Donat, Mark Allister and others take full advantage. Flora Robson is never in the least extended; but merely to hear her speak through her tears or see that lovely figure dart about the stage, one would go to a far worse play. In *Much Ado about Nothing* at the Old Vic, Maurice Evans gave one of his best performances this season. His Benedict was witty; but he was also a bit of a fool—P. G. Wodehouse also was

anticipated by Shakespeare, and Mr. Evans' touch of Archi-ness was supremely right. Mary Newcombe once more proved how impossible it is to tackle Shakespeare with brains only; her Beatrice had everything except charm. The rest of the company ranged from good to adequate: Mr. Cass' production was excellent.

Lastly, *Hamlet* at the New Theatre. This production must be one of the worst ever seen in London. Mr. Gielgud's Hamlet must be one of the best. That he produced the play as well as acted the Prince scarcely seem a sufficient explanation. Not only is the production confused, incoherent, unfinished; Mr. Gielgud's chief supporters are terribly inadequate. Those who came with the liveliest expectations of enjoyment in Jessica Tandy's Ophelia, Laura Cowie's Gertrude and Frank Vosper's Claudius were sadly disheartened. No one would have been surprised had Jessica Tandy at any moment put her hand up and asked if she might leave the stage and Denmark; Laura Cowie never seemed to know she was there, until she awakened into some faint interest in her son in their scene together; Frank Vosper knew he was on the stage, but confused his part with that of the player-king, now wooden, now hysterical. Of the other parts Polonius was as good as he could be; George Howe had to a delightful precision the old man's absolute solemnity, and it was not his fault that his make-up was more suited to George Osborne senior than to the Court Chamberlain. Jack Hawkins' Horatio was extremely intelligent; he played exquisitely in tune with Hamlet's rare snatches of tenderness and in the death scene and his final speech had the Roman dignity proper to his part. William Devlin was resonant and moving as the Ghost, and Frith Banbury's Osric had the right touch of fantasticality. To finish with complaints.

## Pictures

Was the court of Elsinore so unlike that of Elizabeth that all, from King and Queen downwards had but one habit or frock? Why was the priest, at 'the maimed rites' wearing a late Roman chasuble of gay colours and gold? At most he would have had a surplice – probably only a black gown. Never has the Queen shown so little emotion as did Laura Cowie at Polonius' death; and the court in that final scene of sudden death were less moved than a crowd of patients watching someone go before his turn into a dentist's waiting-room. Remains John Gielgud's Hamlet. Presumably he must have worked on his magnificent performance since the first night. There was no trace now of that purely cerebral interpretation which some praised and others denounced. He was fiery, extravagant, an adept at feigned madness, and, as Hamlet should be, a man of action, though, as is again right, by tradition and training rather than by temperament. The strong religious colour of the play, frequently overlooked, became prominent. His words to Horatio – 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy' (he gave 'your' its impersonal connotation) hinted at long arguments between him, the Christian who finds his faith hard to practise, and Horatio, who might be cousin to Sir Walter Raleigh. His meditations on death and after-death were troubled by his inability to decide whether the Ghost were, as he claims, in purgatory, whether he was from heaven or hell, or some spirit simulating the royal Dane. He walked rapidly while he soliloquized in 'To be or not to be,' and thus finely rescued that speech from the appearance of being a religious meditation. In the scenes with Polonius he balanced admirably between impatient arrogance at the old man's chatter and kindly amusement with Ophelia's father. He had one fault: he walked too often

with knees bent – Hamlet may stoop from neck or shoulders but should preserve the soldier's carriage of the body: at times, however, he rose to a fine height, as when swearing Marcellus to secrecy. He was royal, born to his state – suffering from his own nearly-suppressed anger that Claudius had cheated him out of his election. He took the utmost advantage of the great poetry he has to speak, and moved with exquisite ease from that to the more colloquial speeches. His performance adds another to the list of great Hamlets, and should be missed by none who care for the theatre.

### AT THE PICTURE GALLERIES

ARE there no reputable English portrait painters? The exhibition of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters certainly makes one ask this question. The show was relieved by the four works of Miss Ethel Walker, otherwise the great majority of the pictures were unpleasantly painted, badly posed, vulgar in conception and entirely uninteresting in treatment. Mr. de László has a show of royal portraits at Knoedlers'. It is unfortunate that there should be a Cézanne in the same building. Cézanne's portrait of his wife is the picture of a plain woman painted with the same literalness with which he would have painted a potato. She is set in her background, not posed in an empty canvas, and the entire truthfulness with which she is painted gives her far more dignity than could an elaborate décolletage. Even the portrait drawings of Mr. Stanley Spencer at Tooth's Gallery lack inspiration. They are well drawn and nicely modelled, but there is no real beauty in the line or life in the heads.

Only the painters of portraits make a secure income to-day; their work is commissioned, and commissioned art unquestionably has a better chance of being good than the present unnatural arrange-



## Pictures

ment of art for the artist; and it has a great tradition. Yet the only really good English portrait to be seen at the galleries this month is the portrait of the proprietor at Barbizon House, by the seventy-four-year-old Mr. Wilson Steer. It is a lovely picture, as subtle and penetrating as an Ingres and yet with a peculiarly English perfection and serenity.

The vitality of the generation of Steer is again forcibly apparent at the London Group exhibition. Far and away the best picture is Mr. Sickert's 'The Wedding'. As the acting of Mr. Henry Amley and Sir John Martin Harvey suddenly makes much of the acting of the London stage look unfinished, amateurish and altogether lacking in style, in the same way Mr. Sickert exposes the work of the younger generations. 'The Wedding' is perhaps better than any of the paintings at Mr. Sickert's show at the Leicester Galleries. None of them have the same masterly, malicious skill, and there is, in general, a feeling of emptiness alike in composition and in incident. The exceptions are the pictures where Mr. Sickert has ingeniously borrowed, and burlesqued, both from early Victorian prints. As an illustration of the development of English art since Sickert, the London Group is a very interesting exhibition, and an apt continuation of Agnew's 'Gainsborough to Grant' Exhibition. The original generation of Roger Fry, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell seem already to be old masters, in this, outstripping Sickert their predecessor.

They are directly followed by Mr. Ethelbert White and Mr. Seabrooke, but the next group, Mr. Gertler, Mr. Dunlop, Mr. Coxon and Mr. Hughes Stanton, are diverse in their interests. They have found new and particular problems and inspiration. The key to the common element in all this diversity is suggested by the youngest generation whose preoccupation is with colour, literary interest and romantic landscape. And the sug-

gestion is confirmed by consideration of art outside the London Group. What could be more literary than surrealism, or more romantic at heart than the abstract movement?

Agnew's show gives the pedigree of this romanticism. The Millais study for the Tate 'Order of Release' and Walter Greaves' 'A Breezy Day, Cheyne Walk' – a charming picture, by a charming artist – suggest the literary tradition which is one of the strongest and most real currents in nineteenth-century painting. The purely romantic is better illustrated. There is a fine Rossetti and a wonderfully rich and beautiful little Burne-Jones, 'Danae and the Brazen Tower,' but most interesting is the comparison of three landscapes by David Cox, Watts and Mark Gertler. The big Cox 'Bettws-y-Coed' painted in 1850, makes a tragic masterpiece of the dismal group of people under the cold cliffs. The Watts 'Loch Ness' is a half-luminous, half-misty picture of which it is hard to be sure whether it is good or bad. 'Catalonia,' Gertler's landscape, is a picture of red buildings caught in a light as rich and yellow as Turner's in the Campagna, which makes them warm and human among the surrounding unlit barren hills. In each case the significance of the picture is in its romance. Is it possible that modern art is not so disconnected from the past after all; that the establishment of purely formal values was an interlude, not a revolution?

In any case there was ample foreign material on show last month from which to study the romantic attitude. There was the remarkable Fantin Latour exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery. Fantin Latour is usually represented by sound but depressing flower pieces, but here his portraits, interiors and fantastic figure compositions were also shown. 'La Féerie' and 'La Tentation de Saint Antoine' are interesting excursions into the romantic manner and spirit. But they

## Music

are excursions only and prove that his real talent was for the unemotional statement of ordinary things. Once, however, in the early 'Intérieur Rue de Beaune', done in 1850, he achieves a picture which is not altogether unemotional and matter-of-fact, and is still full of meaning; in some ways fuller than the flower paintings, for its exquisite intimacy is touching where they are dead and cold.

The Leicester Galleries exhibition of French colour prints of the period round 1830 is certainly wholehearted. It is a reminder of a flamboyant phase which has no parallel in England, where the contemporaries of Deveria, Gavarni, Lari and Maurin were the mild designers of sporting prints, or satirical illustrators like Cruikshank and H.B. Much nearer to the French prints in taste are the miniatures of the late Mogul School of the end of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, now exhibited in the British Museum. They have not the blatant vulgarity and sentiment which is perhaps the chief attraction of the French work, instead theirs is the simple appeal of moonlit nights and lovers in exquisite clothes. And they are painted with a richness and delicacy which is far superior in technical skill to the French. The painting of the hair half covered by a transparent gold-edged veil in the portrait of Nur Jahan, the wife of Jahangir, is an example of skill in painting and restraint in colour which is in many ways more pleasing than the classical portraits of the seventeenth-century Mogul School. The Indians were very fallible as colourists, but when they do achieve restraint the opaqueness of their medium secures a unique effect. The 'Devotee receiving a Cup from a Disciple' is a good example. The clothes, his white coat and mauve-striped trousers and her gauze-covered pink dress, combine with the orange tiger skin on which they sit and the dark leafy tree behind them to give a lovely impression of

complicated beauty. The Indians have a convention of night by which the figures are painted in full colour while the scenery which envelopes them is a dark background of mysterious clouds, trees and lakes. The convention is the same, and the effect as romantic as in Uccello's 'Night Hunt,' in the Ashmolean. This attitude is so fundamental that even the 'Fat-tailed Sheep' is romantic as he stands on edge of the horizon against the blue sky with its pink clouds.

The most romantic and the most perfect picture of last month, however, was the fifteenth-century Persian miniature of 'Layla and Majnun' which Sir Bernard Eckstein has presented to the British Museum. There is a world of difference between the sentimental romance of the Indians and the French, and this emotional romance. Every detail, the hot blue sky and the tree bare of leaves but white with blossom, the serpentine brook in the foreground and the many-coloured tents, is instinct with passion. The drama of that moment, of the meeting of the lovers of the desert, is translated into the relation of the figures, into the colour and composition, with almost extravagant intensity. Equal depth of feeling is only found in the early seventeenth-century Indian painting of the 'Ox and Mule at a Well with a Swarm of Bees'. The serenity of the slow movement of the water wheel and the brown earth, which seems a symbol of human stability, is a fine contrast to the tense pitch of the Persian drama.

### *MUSIC IN LONDON*

At the B.B.C Chamber Concert on November 16th the early string quartet opus 10 of Schoenberg was performed with wonderful sensitiveness and understanding by the Kolisch Quartet and Margot Hindenberg Lefèvre. With Schoenberg, opus numbers are a snare. Turning from this quartet to opus 11 one may well wonder

## Music

what extraordinary revolution took place in the composer's mind to produce so violent a metamorphosis. It is like watching one of those eerie films of a plant's life history, in which the gradual development of weeks is squeezed into sixty seconds. Actually, as with Schubert, the opus numbers of Schoenberg's works are not trustworthy witnesses of their chronology; between opus 10, begun in 1907, and opus 11, which appeared in 1909, there are several transitional works which bridge the gap. Even a year or two of silence would offer some explanation; more material evidence of growth, however, is contained in the second part of opus 12, the songs, opus 14, and the fifteen poems by Stefan George, opus 15, all of which, contrary to appearances, belong to a period between opus 10 and 11. The quartet in F sharp minor contains the seed of that strange plant which was to blossom in the 'Drei Klavier Stuecke'; one would describe it as highly chromatic rather than atonal, and though its chromaticism only slightly exceeds that of Wagner, it exhibits all the symptoms of that tonal disintegration which was to have so profound an influence on post-war European music.

The Contemporary Concert at Broadcasting House on November 23rd was devoted to works for chamber orchestras, conducted by Mr. Constant Lambert; two were reinforced by a pianoforte, played by Mlle. Marcelle Meyer. The effect would have been improved had the pianist not been compelled to perform on the horrible instrument provided by the B.B.C., from which, with all the skill in the world, it was impossible to draw more than a hideous clatter in the fortes and a hoarse whisper in the pianos. It seems strange that in so luxurious a citadel as that in Langham Place one should meet with the sort of instrument that usually maintains a sordid and unhappy existence in the wings of a provincial music-hall. Its brazen tones enhanced the rather clamor-

ous nature of the music presented, which, considering the fewness of the instruments employed, succeeded in producing a quite prodigious volume of sound. The difficulty of preparing a concert of modern music that exhibits even the rudiments of good programme-building is very great, and on this occasion the fundamental lack of resource displayed by the four composers represented gave a feeling of sameness to the whole evening. These composers were de Roos, Eric Chisholme, Markevitch and Darius Milhaud, diverse enough in nationality to have given the programme a more definite character. The problem is the ever-present one of composers who have thrown overboard most of the *materia musica* of the past, key-relations, the rhetorical value of dissonant intervals, the contrast of metrically appreciable phrasing – most, in fact, of the elements of what is, or was, known as 'form', without having found anything constructive to take their place, or, alternatively, anything that can well be said without their assistance. In attempting to mark points of departure and of subsequent relation thereto, the Chisholme work was perhaps the most enterprising; for me, however, a certain clumsy and laborious feeling, which may have been intentional, seemed to bottle up the spirit of the music. We must be grateful to the B.B.C. for enabling us to listen to occasional examples of what is happening in present-day Europe, and whatever we may think of the quality of the last selection, an opportunity of judging for ourselves is always to be eagerly embraced. In the circumstances, it may seem merely ill-humoured to make any complaints about the atmosphere which tends to prevail at all gatherings such as this. It is impossible to avoid the feeling, however, that the music is being received rather as though it were a museum specimen under a glass case. It is subject to a curious scrutiny, as one might examine a mediæval palimpsest

## Films

— not the sort of reading that has much message for us, but conceivably of a certain interest to a small section of the community. When all is said and done, we are only vouchsafed comparatively fleeting glimpses of contemporary musical thought, and the majority of listeners would hear the B.B.C. concert with ears very ill-versed in the current language of to-day. We should embrace every opportunity, therefore, to present for inspection the really outstanding figures of the times, amongst which, I think one may say without presumption, none of the four composers represented at this concert takes any place. A contemporary concert is paradoxically one of those undesirable things for which we must always be grateful. The implication involved, that contemporary music will only be tolerated by a handful of people who, when once gathered together, will stomach it in large (and in this case loud) doses, is deplorable, yet, at present, apparently justified. Hence the activities of the numerous cabalistic societies which give heroic performances of modern music, as it were, underground, in places to which only the sincere enthusiast will penetrate.

The real liaison of contemporary music and life is a consummation we have yet to experience. A double gesture, no doubt, is to be made, of readiness from the public, and of acknowledgment from the composer of the public's existence. It must be admitted that many composers, in Central Europe and elsewhere, are maintaining an attenuated existence in a kind of stratosphere of their own minds. It is not so much that they do not breathe the air of common mortals, as that they do not breathe at all. From an historical point of view, it is probably no great catastrophe that music should retire to the laboratory for a few years; it may emerge into the open air with all the more vigorous a bloom. It only remains for us to seek what contact we can and to experience the

many manifestations of vitality in which it still abounds.

### ON THE SCREEN

At the present moment, all over the world there is a tendency towards the making of propaganda films. Hollywood, hard pressed by the purity campaign, has turned its attention to the showing up of world wars in *The World Moves On*. The film deals with the progress of the Girard family in the cotton trade during the last 100 years; but the members of this family are not an ideal group to choose for this story's particular pacifist theme. They had health, strength, good looks, but surely an over-developed sense of possession. The family toast, always recited by the youngest member at every reunion, was a solemn oath to put the family before everything. Naturally the family prospered, and prosperity striven after and attained is always a great help in the making of any film. The Girards prospered in America, Germany, France and England up to the time of the Great War; then everything crumbled around them. Fortunately we are not shown the details of the development of the cotton industry in this country, therefore there was no glimpse of the iniquitous conditions that prevailed during its early days; such details would detract from the villainy of the big bad wolf, 'War.' An unnecessary number of war scenes were thrown on the screen; war scenes, good in themselves, but somehow stifling and smothering the story of the particular people concerned.

There seems to be no medium in which war, the actual physical thing, can be truthfully described. It must be experienced to be thoroughly hated and despised. The things outside the actual conflict convey its horror so much more than bangs and shocks in close up. In this film, for example, the simple and quite cheerful scenes, showing various men returning to France after leave,

## Letter

carry more weight than all the heavy artillery massed on the different fronts.

The film is developed on the same lines as *Cavalcade*, and the heroine, who goes through varying vicissitudes, remains strangely unaffected, unperturbed. When towards the end she makes a speech declaring her disbelief in the possibility of future wars, the words are taken out of her mouth – as only the screen can take words out of mouths – by a series of flashes of every nation preparing for war: Hitler addressing troops, Mussolini taking a salute on a vast parade ground, Chinese and Russian regiments marching, troops, more troops, guns, British gun-boats ploughing their way through the sea. This would have been an effective end to the film; but alas! someone's courage failed. The hero and heroine must visit the original homestead. They find it in a state of decay and decide it must be repaired. This anti-climax could have been easily avoided had not those responsible been overcome by timidity.

Harold Lloyd's film *The Cat's Paw* is an excellent piece of fun to us, but to anyone living in a town in the Middle West it must be infinitely more than that. After assisting his father as a missionary for years in China, the hero returns to his old home town in search of a suitable bride. Through a fantastic chain of circumstances he inadvertently cleans up its very unclean political government. The film, devoid of most of the usual Lloyd slapstick, shows the subtlety of this comedian and proves excellent entertainment. The opportunity to fit names to the crooked local politicians would make it more than mere entertainment. It might even be worth while spending a year or two in an American city to see a film like this at the end of the visit.

The new René Clair film, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*, is a definite disappointment, though it has some brilliant flashes which would be very refreshing in the average

film. It is rather sad, however, to find this director entertaining us with such jokes as a Prime Minister tripping over a step and a footman appearing without a collar. Dictators and monarchies may be great fun to play about with in France, and possibly this film will be appreciated in France more than it is here.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR SIR,

I have just received from you a reprint, presumably intended as an advertisement, from the November number of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, entitled 'Affairs of Men.' It is fortunate that I am already aware of the merits of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, or I should be sadly prejudiced against it by this particular item, as it is both misinformed and based upon fallacious arguments. The writer of this article questions the desirability of spending public money on 'mere diversion-reading,' and suggests that no novels published less than ten years ago should be on the shelves of a public library. Do you agree that all novels are 'mere diversion-reading?' That is the first stupidity.

The second point is that the writer maintains that 'everyone capable of paying for his or her amusement ought to be made to do so.' Has the writer forgotten that there are some millions of unemployed men and their families in this country, and even more whose income does not permit of any expenditure upon books? And does the writer realize that a large percentage of these people use the public libraries, and find pleasure and encouragement by 'mere diversion-reading' which they could not obtain otherwise?

Thirdly, though this is a much less important point, has the writer the slightest idea what percentage of the book fund of any public library is spent upon current fiction?

## Letter

I sincerely trust that your Circulation Manager when sending enticing extracts to other potential subscribers will realize that it is an impertinence for laymen to put before men who have devoted their lives to a particular task opinions which are based upon ignorance and prejudice.

Yours faithfully,

LIONEL R. MCCOLVIN,  
Honorary Secretary,  
Library Association.

[Mr. McColvin misapprehends the purpose of the leaflet, reprinted from the November number of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, which has provoked his letter. It was *not* sent as an advertisement of the magazine, but as a statement on a controversial theme likely to be of special interest to him and his association. The sending of it is sufficiently justified by his letter.

The arguments in his letter display a confusion of mind, of which we should not have suspected the Library Association to be capable. Mr. McColvin asserts that our 'first stupidity' is to declare all novels to be mere diversion-reading. We declared nothing of the kind. We pointed out, however, that one important London Library has just pronounced itself unwilling or unable to decide which novels are worth a place on its shelves and which not; and, therefore, we naturally assumed that it was not considered to be within the province of a Public Librarian to distinguish between good and bad fiction.

Mr. McColvin's second point is to remind us of the existence of unemployed men and their families, and to accuse us of depriving such men of the opportunity of diversion-reading. Now in the final paragraph of our comment on this matter we specifically mentioned the unemployed as persons who should be exempted from the necessity of paying a fee for the right to use public libraries for diversion purposes, if any such fee

system were introduced in this country.

Mr. McColvin ignores the fact that we proposed not the exclusion of all novels but the exclusion of novels less than ten years old. Bearing in mind the enormous number of novels in public libraries published more than ten years ago, we cannot take very seriously his suggestion that no diversion-reading whatsoever would be available for persons unable to pay for it.

Mr. McColvin's third point is that we have no idea what percentage of the book fund of any public library is spent upon current fiction. If that is so, it is because the necessary figures are not willingly made public. We are, however, very well aware of the percentage of many library *issues* represented by fiction, as we have carefully studied the reports of such libraries as are candid enough to give this information.

Finally, we will give Mr. McColvin challenge for challenge: does he think the officials of public libraries should deny the right of 'laymen' to criticize their administration? Mr. McColvin seems to forget that the libraries are paid for out of public money, and that the public have every right to give their views on the suitability or otherwise of their management. We had specialists in the Great War – military specialists who resented all lay criticism as the chatter of ignoramuses. In the years since the War, these military specialists and their policy have been sadly discredited. It seems strange that Mr. McColvin should now, in the realm of letters, arrogantly claim a similar immunity – Editor: *LIFE AND LETTERS*.]

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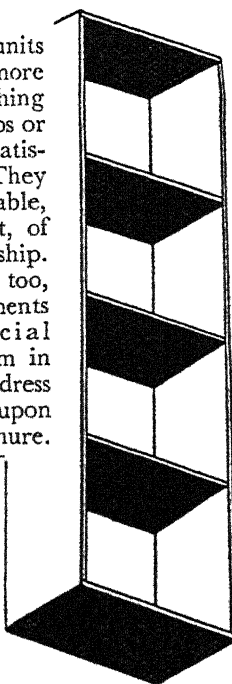
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# Life and Letters

January, 1935

## Affairs of Men

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### IN EUROPE NOW

WE have been basking –slumbering is perhaps the word –in the no-man's-light of December. A month during which there has been a lull –gratifying rather than reassuring. A hundred leashed dogs have wagged slow-motion tails while pricking their ears.

We have our tit-bits: Herr Furtwangler –denounced by some as an arriviste, defended by others as a man prepared to give a false impression in order to help his fellow artists – deals a final blow to Nazi hopes of an artistic renaissance.

Golden hair, blue eyes, red (or pure) blood are not enough. Even though you begin by condoning you end by recanting – to reputable people the interregnum of hedging brings inevitably defeat without glory.

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Weihnacht is not a Christian feast. The answer that it is *also* a Christian feast is no answer in a Nordic World. To Herr Rust, Sir James Fraser, had he heard of him, would be as distasteful as a dissident Bishop. Thought in our one-man countries is inevitably

a one-way street and faith a political corner in belief.

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Pending the Saar plebiscite there is hush over Europe. Herr Hitler is reported to plan the suppression of the more passionately anti-French passages in *Mein Kampf*. A clean-up of men is easier than a clean-up of words. The evil that we print lives with us. There is no difficulty about killing a man. It is impossible to suppress an adjective. 'Not God Himself upon the past hath power'

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The German Church controversy bobs about on a choppy sea. The victory of the dissident clergy, though spiritually and numerically complete, appears to lack the rubber stamp that authority alone can affix. Herr Hitler possessing Divine power is presumably indifferent both to the Almighty and to Wotan. This mess of Gods cannot be of any importance to him. Yet he appears to hesitate and to waver. Personal loyalties – Reichsbishop Müller is an old friend of his – have not hitherto impeded his actions. The

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Protestant Church is not a vital factor in the Saar. Where does the conflict lie?

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The Catholic problem is of far greater immediate moment. Signor Mussolini wrote an article for the *Figaro*, which was reproduced in the *Osservatore Romano*. In it he denounced any connection between the Church and the State. The itinerary of this expression of views is as interesting as the firm and unveiled attack on German religious policy. The reputable fact remains: no amount of soft pedalling can muffle the sharp sincerities and disinterested loyalties of genuine believers.

The problem of Austria appeared to have been temporarily solved by the admirably negotiated and vitally important pourparlers in which Signor Mussolini, Monsieur Laval and the Comte de Chambrun have been engaged. Last-minute hitches have unfortunately occurred. Austria herself is said to dislike the character of her guarantors – to some of whom she would prefer not to be beholden. But the happiest feature in foreign affairs during the last few months has been the improvement in Franco-Italian relations, and the few outstanding colonial questions that lie between the two countries should surely yield to mutual good-will.

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As foreshadowed in these notes, the Prince Regent Paul of Yugo-Slavia has proved himself wise, statesmanlike and beneficent. The Hungarian expulsions were carried out while he was away, behind his back and without his know-

ledge. He has done his best to redeem the situation, and though the Ministry of M. Yevtitch is weaker than one might have hoped it would be – the 'old guard' is adamant, and alas! all too powerful – every effort is being made to secure the co-operation of the Opposition. Dr. Matchek has been released and conciliation is the order of the day.

Even majorities are not always right, and it requires an effort of the imagination for Western countries to realize the difficulties which confront an enlightened Prince fighting for tolerance against a large number of his subjects and advisers.

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A very brilliant French author writes (in a private letter): 'Your English parliamentary system exists – and I admire it because it is an aristocratic system. I hate plutocracy. I only like aristocracies. Therefore I must become either a Fascist or a Communist, for out of these two movements a new aristocracy will arise.' This passage is quoted because it shows the attitude of a hyper-civilized man to the problem. His faith will probably shatter against a rock of unfastidiousness. Fascism and Communism – synonyms rather than alternatives – present too vulgar or too simple a solution. Aristocracy (obviously not in the social sense of the word) demands a less crude and more graduated system of injustice. Selection must always be the by-word of the individualist, just as to provide each man with the right to select should be the aim of the reformer. It is sad that the obvious fact that any and every form of Fascism *disenfranchises* the aver-

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age man tends to be overlooked alike by supporters and opponents.

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Russia and Germany are again engaged in their favourite sport of 'purging' (what a lesson to the quiet dietitians of other countries!). There are those who would have us believe that M. Kiroff was murdered because he was the advocate of moderation. In that case his murderers must be well satisfied. In Germany immorality has been placed at the disposal of persecution. We have known other successful candidates.

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A brilliant liberal-minded Italian aristocrat of the *ancien régime* said: 'Our dictators, Mussolini, Hitler, Dollfuss [not then dead], Stalin, are all men of the people. We have known men who have risen from the people, but usually – except in the case of soldiers – they have gone through certain stages, schools, universities, etc., etc. Here you have four men who have skipped those stages – in the educated sense of the word, *un-educated* men.'

'Liberty is a middle-class conception, an intellectual conception. Why should they care for this thing that has never meant anything to them? Why should they worry about a luxury so far removed from their range of vision, to them so *irrelevant*?'

This is a profound truth. We prattle of liberty of thought, liberty of action, the need of the individual for self-development, the right of every individual to his own surmises and his own conclusions.

These fables are as strange to

Herr Hitler as they would be to the late Emperor Francis Joseph. Yet it is on this misconception that our appeals, our threats and our policies are based.

\* \* \*

The last session of the League of Nations was encouraging in that Great Britain showed a tendency to become more Europe-minded. At the eleventh hour our Government lurched into good sense by deciding to send troops to the Saar. Why this obviously wise step should have been deferred till the last minute remains unexplained and inexplicable. Our foreign policy, to quote the late Raymond Asquith on general conversation, is 'a series of ugly rushes and awkward pauses.'

\* \* \*

Japan's repudiation of the Washington Treaty surprised no one, but a disaster does not cease to be a disaster because it has been anticipated. The most distressing feature of the world situation is a certain coolness in our relations with the United States. The Foreign Office shows indifference tinged with hostility, the War Office and many of our merchant princes are violently pro-Japanese. We believe that the man in the street takes a wider and further-sighted view. Close Anglo-American co-operation is our most vital necessity. We have not enough ships with which to police the entire world. Our Dominions claim more than they contribute. Our interests and those of the United States are largely identical. We start from the same premises, we aim at the same results. In the intimate association of

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these two great countries should be an armament which – alone of all armaments – could lead to disarmament.

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*Mot de la fin: 'Wir sind alle Toten auf Urlaub.'* (Rosa Luxemburg) (We are all dead men on leave).

### AT HOME

IN home affairs, at any rate, during the past three or four weeks, less than usual seems to have happened. The Christmas holiday period has intervened, and it is a curious but well-defined phenomenon of holiday seasons that when there are no newspapers there is no news. Social students can make what they like of this.

The old year closed on a more or less optimistic note. Despite persistent depression in most parts of the world, the trade of Britain has continued to improve, and there are economists who believe that the improvement is likely to continue still further in the coming year, in the company of other 'sterling countries'; though how far the experiment of lifting ourselves by our own boot-straps can succeed only the event can show. Unemployment figures in the last week of the old year showed a further decline; indeed, the number of people in employment in Great Britain at the end of 1934 was only slightly fewer than in 1929. Still, allowance has to be made for the fact that in the interval the employable population has considerably increased. And when one remembers that there remain over two millions out of work (of which one million have been con-

tinuously unemployed for a year or longer), one feels that the time has hardly yet arrived for throwing one's cap into the air.

\* \* \*

The close of the year was remarkable for one political portent – the announcement of Mr. Lloyd George's intention to re-enter the arena with a bang. Can this grand old man of British politics stage an effective come-back? To look at and speak with he does not appear old, but then he has lately been devoting himself to the literary and rural life, which is a very different thing from the strain of modern politics. Also, to come back one requires a Party – and where is Mr. Lloyd George's? There is no doubt, however, that this picturesque and mercurial personality still makes a big appeal to the sentimental side of the Englishman, and he has his wonderful war record behind him. His mistake, of course, was in not retiring altogether from the scene after the 1921 collapse of his Coalition. He might to-day be the country's leader again, if he had; but how many politicians have the vision and the strength of mind to do so? A great deal, naturally, will depend on the details of his forthcoming programme, which he has been astute enough as yet to conceal. Not much more than a year at most stands between the nation and a general election, and one imagines it will take even this magician all his magic between now and then to carry him to Westminster as prophet of a New Deal for Britain in 1936.

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The changes in administration of unemployment relief which became effective on January 7th make tedious reading for the layman, but are of first importance in the social system of the nation. The main difference is that henceforth the relief of able-bodied unemployment, outside of insurance benefit proper, becomes a central instead of a local charge. It means the disappearance of varying scales of relief; and the national scales which have been fixed tend on the whole to be rather more generous than the average scale hitherto given locally. Especially is this so for households with families, a point which should not be overlooked by those who have pressed for closer official attention to the problem of malnutrition. Probably centralization in some form or another is inevitable and desirable, but the particular form in which it has been devised raises difficulties that may prove to be formidable.

For example, since it is only able-bodied relief that has been centralized, a person whose benefit is being administered by the Unemployment Assistance Board one week, may the next week, if he should fall ill, find himself partially handed over to the care of his local authority; or members of the same household may be at one and the same time under two separate systems of relief. To start with, at any rate, such questions of adjustment between the central and local bodies are likely to prove embarrassing. More fundamental are the possible effects of the new scales of relief on the structure of unemployment insurance. There are those who believe they may be so serious as to threaten its collapse;

others who agree that the effects will be dangerous but trust to the British working man's dislike of getting something for nothing to see it through. More basically still, the recognition of unemployment relief on a subsistence level as a national duty threatens the entire wage-system of the lowest-paid class of worker. Already we not infrequently hear of men and women who 'can't afford' to take a job of work that has been offered them. What was conceived as a piece of administrative reform might yet end as a challenge to the capitalist system.

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The New Year Honours were no less – or no more – remarkable than those of previous years. We have by now become thoroughly acclimatized to the shower of knighthoods and baronetcies awarded 'for public and political services,' which we know means hard work in the cause of the Government of the day, plus, most probably, a thumping donation to Party funds. After all, there is nothing fundamentally more immoral in the manner of founding our new aristocracy than in that of founding our old one. It would be invidious to have to draw an ethical distinction between peerages conferred for successfully robbing one's neighbours in commerce, and those conferred for robbing one's enemy of his lands and life in conquest, which was the method approved by William I.

There remain certain distinctions which are still worth having, pre-eminent among which is the Order of Merit. It was a pleasure to find one most deservedly conferred, in the New

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Year's List, on Professor Mackail, that scholar of rare distinction.

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Both feminists and anti-feminists must equally welcome the proposals of the Law Revision Committee on married women and property. If feminist, they will applaud the intention to remove the disabilities from which a married woman still suffers. If anti-feminist, they will presumably rejoice that the privileges which a married woman enjoys may now be taken from her. Whether one regards it as a privilege or an indignity for a married woman not to be held responsible for her wrongful deeds, it is obviously unjust and at variance with present-day sentiment that her husband, however innocent, should be made to shoulder the burden. In future, if the Law Revision Committee has its way, a husband will not be automatically held responsible for his wife's torts, nor will a married woman be able any longer to defraud her creditors; on the other hand, she *will* be liable to be declared a bankrupt. The Committee, in fact, proposes that a married woman should be put 'in all respects in the same position as an unmarried woman or a man.' And so say all of us.

One suggestion which has been

made is not likely to be carried out. The Committee objects to the treatment of the incomes of husband and wife by the income-tax authorities as one. And so, again, say all of us who have a wife or a husband with a separate income. But what we say is not to the point. What does the Chancellor of the Exchequer think about it?

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It would not be proper to close this commentary without noting with regret the deaths since our last issue of two men, both of whom, in their different ways, made their mark on the Life and Letters of our time. One was Lord Riddell, who, although his chief and dubious monument must remain that stupendous plant of modern journalism the *News of the World*, wrote entertainingly on a variety of subjects, and in his War Diaries proved himself an amused and amusing commentator on a critical short period of our history. The other was Francis Birrell. 'Frankie,' as he was known to his circle, was one of the most brilliant critics of the post-war epoch, a ready journalist and also a writer of work less ephemeral than journalism; his lively conversation and charm of personality will always be affectionately remembered by his many friends.

# 6,000 Miles Through Soviet Russia\*

by Leo Lania

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## THROUGH THE CAUCASUS

THE train stopped. I looked out of the window and saw an imposing station, beyond it wooded hills, a ruin, and on the neatly swept platform a few OGPU men deep in conversation. Everything was very quiet, nothing of the pushing and crowding humanity which generally fills a Russian railway station.

Farther to the right, at the corner of the building, stood a little boy in Caucasian uniform – high boots, sheepskin cap, belt, dagger, cartridges; he was very serious and thoughtful, and when his eyes met mine, he proudly turned away. He was dignified. The small warrior was possibly six years old.

On the face of the building I saw in Georgian and in Russian characters: Mtskheta. Another twenty kilometres to Tiflis. In barely half an hour we should be at our destination.

Just then the guard appeared and said we should have to change, as our train did not go any farther. Quick, quick!

On the next platform stood the other train, but climbing into the carriages proved an impossibility. Crowds of people clung to the steps, inside the carriages they were jammed into thick masses. And still the guards

urged to hurry, the engine was whistling and puffing, somehow or other we also clung to the steps – only half an hour to Tiflis, it would very soon be over.

Ten minutes went by, and we were still there. Some few began to climb out of the train, but the more careful ones kept their seats – we were bound to move on any second.

At the end of half an hour a quite lively parade had developed on the platform. The engine still had steam up, and at short intervals emitted its penetrating signal, but we had long ago given up taking it seriously. No one knew yet why we were stopping so long, why we had had to change, when we were going on.

We waited. Some were sitting, some standing, a few were lying full length on the floor, no one showed impatience or even the slightest curiosity as to when the train would continue its journey.

I had seen this spectacle of a waiting crowd at many stations in the most varied parts of Russia. But this was something quite different. All these men and women, workers, peasant girls, soldiers, did not here blend into the accustomed grey crowd. There were tall muscular black-bearded men in wide goatskin cloaks; others who wore a kind of turban, picturesquely draped strips of flannel, the ends of

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\* *Diary of a Journey in 1934.*

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which hung down their backs; Circassians armed with daggers; bold giants from some mountain village muffled up to the eyes; they might have been taken for Arabs – here were members of about twenty different nationalities who are now united in the Transcaucasian Soviet Republic.

It is hopeless to try and distinguish the names of all these various peoples, their peculiarities and individuality. Text-books on geography and history, and even 'Baedeker,' break down when called upon to act as guides through the labyrinth of the multitudinous nations of the Caucasus. Jews, Armenians, Tartars, Persians, Turks, Russians – these are easily spotted; but what is it that distinguishes the Abkhasian from the Adjar, the Adjar from the Ossete, the Circassian from the Taluychin? And yet they are supposed to be entirely different nations – tribes, each of which has its own century-old history, dwelling side by side in the same mountain recesses, yet at war with each other through the centuries, only united when it came to attacking the Russians, the soldiers of the Tsar or the wealthy merchants travelling down the Grusinian military road, a welcome prey for the free men of the Caucasian mountains.

But the merchants, artisans and officials in the towns and villages of the valley defended their national and intellectual inheritance against their Russian Overlord no less tenaciously and bitterly than the shepherds and huntsmen on the snow-covered heights. Georgia has ever been a simmering cauldron of unrest, conspiracy and rebellion. At the start an ethnographical problem, it became later an

administrative difficulty, which no finesse or trick of a Governor, nor even the machine-guns of the Tsar, ever managed to solve.

Then came the Bolsheviks and, suddenly, instead of one Government there was a League of Nations of three Soviet Republics, which again are subdivided into three autonomous Republics and two autonomous Territories; there were a dozen Governments, and newspapers in a couple of dozen languages, universities, theatres in every conceivable dialect, and a museum of Georgian culture – and the national question was solved.

The administrative problem was solved by the OGPU. Let the twenty nations set up their twenty Governments in twenty different places, yet the threads all meet in one spot – in Tiflis.

And Tiflis is not only the capital of the Transcaucasian Confederation, it is also an 'administrative centre' of the OGPU. To be the capital, have 300,000 inhabitants in one spot, that is not anything special. But to be the administrative centre of the OGPU, that means fifty or eighty men who have but one thought, but one will, who know but one aim which is of more importance to them than sleep or life or all the pleasures of this world.

Two such men were just going by, the bronze pin on their military tunic was the 'Cheka badge of honour'; they also wore belt and dagger, and talked together in Georgian, so there could be no question of their being true Georgians; but each carried in his pocket the membership book of the Russian Communist Party, and of



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what avail are nationality and people against the possession of that little book in its red cover, against the certainty that no problem and no doubt, and not the most complicated national question, can stand up against the inscription in letters of gold on the cover of the book: 'Proletarians of all Countries, Unite'? Such a faith – that is power. And that power has welded twenty nations into one people.

Three hours later we learnt that the railway bridge this side Tiflis had been destroyed by floods, and that an emergency bridge was being built. Now we should be able to proceed at any moment. Meanwhile, it was noon, no food could be obtained anywhere, and as our hunger increased, our suspicions of the promises of the guard increased too. Supposing the bridge should not be ready till the next day?

So we snaffled a conveyance from somewhere, and decided to cover the twenty kilometres to Tiflis by road. In three hours we were at our destination. The train arrived about the middle of the night.

These last twenty kilometres this side Tiflis along the Grusinian military road are an object-lesson of the earliest history of mankind. Suddenly you understand why the Caucasus has ever been the cockpit of so many nations and tribes, the dividing line between Asia and Europe, a 'Cradle of Mankind.' Not far away stands Ararat, and it was perhaps in that ditch to the right of the road that Noah slept off the after effects of the vine.

Hills to the north and to the south, and between them a fertile valley, the

natural and shortest road from Mesopotamia, India and Central Asia to Europe, to the shores of the Black Sea and farther on to the Mediterranean. Whilst we were trotting along the asphalted main road, with ruins on the heights to the right and left and between them the wild Kura, a roaring mountain river, we passed donkey caravans and ox-drawn vehicles, on the pastures droves of galloping horses and countless sheep – a few hundred years ago the scene was probably the same. But beyond a bend in the road we suddenly came on an electric power station, the water raced into a coffer-dam, and in the middle of the river stood a statue of Lenin. Lenin and the power station did not stand here in the olden days. Nor did the tractors which crawl along the fields to the left, nor the little white tents of the soldiers which form long rows up the slopes of the hills: the engineer regiments of Tiflis are busy with the repair of the damage caused by the floods.

We drove into Tiflis. Our first thought was – Salzburg. Not that the cities are at all alike; the broad Boulevard was typical of the Russian provinces, the swarms in the narrow lanes were Turkish, but the position of the town on the river and the way in which the houses climbed up the side of the hill, together with the castle-like walls on the top, somehow it reminded us of Salzburg. With its plentiful green, its parks, its imposing houses in the style of the turn of the century, Tiflis remains the town of officialdom. In the older districts, near the Bazaar, live artisans, traders,

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but no workmen. There are as yet few indications of the Soviet system, of the new Russia.

Later on I sauntered through the Bazaar. There they still sat in their wall recesses, silversmiths, gold workers, cobblers, making their daggers and belt, and preparing the leather for the pliable high boots – here was the true East.

And between-times they traded. Trading, here, has never been merely a means of livelihood, but always, and above all, a game, an adventure, not just a way of making money, but an end in itself, almost a sport; it added spice to life. And is all this at an end now?

It is not at an end yet, but it is dying. The new generation goes off to the power station, to the new factories, to the oil-fields. The men sitting here in the Bazaar are the last glimmer of a past which little by little is sinking into the dust, just like the great Mosque on the Boulevard, amongst whose ruins children are playing 'touch,' and whose place next year will be occupied by a Working Men's Club. And the beautiful daggers and buckles and carvings will be obtained from the factories, from the endless band. A trade is dying? No, an art.

There is a museum at Tiflis too. There you can see the magnificent products of the home industries of the various hill tribes, hand-woven cloths and carpets, gorgeous weapons, but you also see the primitive holes in which the hill folk have their dwellings, cows, sheep and human beings in the

same room, two boards making a bed, the women's beds surrounded by a rail with sharp teeth: it must be a dangerous thing to approach the bed of a Caucasian woman.

Then there are photographs and statistics about the various tribes of the Caucasus. One of them is a whole 800 strong. They dwell somewhere right high up close to the ice edge, and lead a completely primitive life. When a woman is expecting a child, she is driven forth from the community, and must go alone behind some rock to bring her babe into the world; only the oldest woman of the tribe is allowed to provide her with a jug of water.

That is how it was two years ago, three years ago. To-day they have a hospital up there and a school, a road goes up, and telegraph wires; a tribe of 800 savages has become a nation. In a few years perhaps they will number a thousand.

I know it is at bottom a very big question whether civilization is such an improvement and such a blessing, and whether the 800 up there will be happier with their hospital and hygiene, their reading and writing, than they were before. But it is curious how, looking at those statistics and those photographs, that pessimistic doubt sinks slowly into the background, and even the sorrow at the dying out of an art grows dim, and what a strong feeling of pride suddenly springs up: this hospital at the top of the world has been built by plain men, the doctors who are on duty there, the teachers who spend whole days climbing over the hills in order to teach reading and writing to small Circassian children; they are no famous heroes. And yet

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what is the finest carpet and the most gorgeous belt and all romance when compared with the sober reality of a text-book and a vaccination syringe? Face to face with the mother driven out to a dark cave in the mountains, looking forth like a frightened animal, everything becomes so clear and simple. A mother, a woman, a human being is in distress. She must be helped. It is a good thing that help was brought to her.

It was night when I motored out into the hills. A dry hot wind was sweeping through Tiflis. It parched one's throat.

After we had left the last houses of the town behind us, the wind grew stronger, but up here it flung at us not only the sand of the desert, but also the cold of the glaciers. It was possible to breathe again.

In a shimmering sky the moon swam in a viscous cloud. It looked evil – green and venomous. Deep down below lay the city with its rows of sparkling lights. Around us were the howling of the storm and the wide wilderness of the bare hills. Suddenly, after a sharp bend in the road, an ox-drawn cart loomed in front. Our car pulled up smartly. At a walking pace we crawled on behind. To right and left two boys hung on to our car. In the uncertain light I saw the two ragged urchins, their laughing faces, their hands upraised in entreaty. From both sides they talked urgently.

I fished about in my pocket for a rouble note. 'Have you any change?' I asked the chauffeur.

'They don't want money,' he said. 'They are begging for paper and pencil.'

All I had on me was a fat note-book, which I presented to them. The boys jumped off, the chauffeur accelerated, the car shot forward. Behind us the cart and the children vanished in the dusk.

And once more we were alone in the night and the solitude of the hills.

### *CETLON BY THE BLACK SEA*

The great tea plantations beyond Chakwa.

Once upon a time they had been Botanical Gardens. They have no beginning and no end; for many long hours you can wander through them, by broad avenues and narrow paths, along bamboo forests, through orange and palm groves; the earth is red, the bamboo leaves of a tender, delicate green, like replete beasts of prey; thick bracken creeps across the path.

Then the country becomes hilly; buffalo are grazing here, and in the valley a miniature landscape has been set up: dwarf trees, tiny forests seeming to belong to a Noah's ark, mimosa, bridges and grottoes of pocket size. This is Japan.

Ten minutes farther on lies Australia, and once past the bananas we are in Africa. Every sub-tropical plant flourishes on this coast and in this climate, so the Tsar had the park laid out as a curiosity – a vast magnificent flower show.

But Soviet Russia will not tolerate luxury, and even botanical gardens must serve economic purposes. The beauty of a palm, the perfume of a rose – they are effete 'art for art's sake.' The Plan only recognizes the results to the Commonwealth.

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The park is immense, but in the midst of its gorgeous show of flowers stands a small unassuming house, and inside a few professors and their assistants are sitting before their microscopes and their retorts. The walls are covered with statistical tables, in the flasks coloured fluids are bubbling and boiling, botanical books and reviews are stacked up on the tables, the scent of lemons, oranges and roses pervades every room – it is in this laboratory that the perfumes are mixed which are intended, even before the expiration of the second Five-Year Plan, to drive the creations of Monsieur Coty out of the boudoirs of European and American ladies.

Perfumes are a good thing; but camphor and Japanese lacquer are better still. True it is that the scent of camphor is not so distinguished as attar of roses, but medical science attaches no exaggerated value to pleasant smell. And munition manufacturers still less.

Up to now Japan has had the exclusive monopoly of camphor; that monopoly must be destroyed. If the few camphor bushes in the Botanical Gardens have done so well, why should it not be possible to grow the tree on a large scale? For two years experiments were made, and when the most favourable ground for their growth was found, all the ornamental shrubs flourishing there were destroyed, and the place of the magnificent old palms was taken by scrubby little camphor trees. They are much less decorative, but make up for this by standing much higher in the balance sheet of the Five-Year Plan. And the same applies to Japanese lacquer. The Botanical

Gardens have been turned into a huge experimental plantation.

Beyond the Gardens lies Ceylon. As far as the eye can see, right up to the distant mountains, the low hills are covered with long rows of dark-leaved bushes. Hedges of orange trees enclose the tea plantations. In the silvery mist of the warm rain which falls without ceasing, the landscape looks as unreal as a Japanese drawing. Brilliant touches of colour are given to it by the red kerchiefs of the pickers. The earth steams, it is as hot as in a hot-house; there's not a breath of air. In the distance, behind ancient cypresses, shines the front of a vast building. A palace? A church? No, a factory.

In Georgia there are to-day fourteen such installations for the drying of tea. By the end of next year it is intended to put up a further thirty-eight, sixty-eight within two years. They are equipped with the most modern English and American machinery and marvellously fitted up. By the year 1938 there will be 100,000 hectares in cultivation, which will by then yield an annual crop of 70 million kilogrammes of tea (at present 42,000 hectares are under cultivation).

Seventy million kilogrammes, a third more than the total tea requirements of the Soviet Union. And whilst as recently as 1928 Russia spent 30 million roubles, nearly half the total sum expended in the purchase of foodstuffs, on buying Chinese tea, in six years' time this will have become unnecessary.

'Russian tea' up to now has been Chinese tea which reached the world

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markets overland by way of Russia; thanks to the particular mode of transport – by means of camel caravans – this tea kept its aroma better than the tea sent by boat or by rail; and was called ‘Russian or Caravan tea.’ After the ‘Victory on the Tea Front,’ it will no longer be possible to doubt the genuineness of the Russian tea, of which the Soviets hope to be able to throw 20 million kilogrammes annually on the world markets. It will not be of such good quality as that coming from Ceylon or India or China, but it will be appreciably cheaper. At any rate, the Russian peasants and workers will be satisfied with it, for even the coarse leaves on the shrubs, which are not picked till the very last, are used in Russia; compressed in hard bricks, this ‘dry tea’ is a much-valued foodstuff, the favourite soup of the hill people, the Kalmucks and Mongolians.

The rain grew heavier. Like a thick curtain it hung over the landscape.

The trees were still, not a leaf stirred, not a sound disturbed the heavy breathing of the saturated earth.

In the distance a girl was singing. It was some time before we became conscious of it, for the deep contralto voice blended so naturally into the monotonous sound of the rain.

In a big open shed at the entrance to the park a school of boys and girls between the ages of eight and thirteen had taken shelter. A Ukrainian peasant girl sat in the midst of them and sang her song, a melancholy sigh fluttered into the distance over the palm trees and slowly died away. The children were playing.

Our arrival caused a sensation. But as if they were men and women of the great world, the children tried to pretend not to notice us; only sideways they looked at us long and searchingly. Whispering and muttering was around us, until suddenly a boy picked up a balalaika, another joined in on the fiddle – the hard unmelodious rhythm of a Caucasian folk song broke forth, infected boys and girls, and in an instant a wide ring was formed and the dance had begun.

Slowly at first, his arms crossed on his chest, a muscular lad passed along the ring, proudly swaying from his hips, his steps grew quicker, the stamping rhythm became wilder, now he danced in front of a little girl, looked at her with twinkling eyes, bowing slightly. Her embarrassment lasted but a few seconds, then she too leapt into the ring and joined in the dance.

She was perhaps ten years old; with her large, slightly veiled black eyes and blue-black hair, she might have been taken for an Italian, but the curiously strong little nose and the sharp features clearly betrayed the Georgian race.

The child continued dancing. The gracefulness of her movements had a touching charm; the way she played with her little kerchief, placed it on the ground, danced round it, knelt down and picked it up with her teeth; the boy had long ago stopped his dance and returned to the ring, and the children enthusiastically acknowledged the little girl’s performance with applause and cries of approval. At the same time all eyes were on us: did we like the dance? Had we under-

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stood that the performance was for our benefit, for us alone?

All these boys and girls were poorly dressed, wore wretched little slippers instead of shoes, but they were radiantly happy. They abandoned themselves to the dance as to an exciting game. We were touched by their artless and childish pleasure at our admiration, childish yet full of self-possession, like small grown-ups; not in the least precocious or affected, and yet in some way completely mature, experienced. They had not the matter-of-factness of European children, neither had they their limpness—they were finished human beings.

As we were going away, the first dancer came up to us. Had we been pleased? Would we not stay a little longer? They knew better dances still. The others joined in, all talking together. Now they were children again.

Only the Ukrainian peasant girl remained quietly in the background; it was clear that she felt strange and lost among these people. Then she pulled her red kerchief tighter round her and went away. She seemed somewhat hurt that we had paid so little attention to her. In spite of her age, she gave the impression of being much more naïve and immature than the Georgian children.

As she turned into the path leading to the fields, she began to sing again—a song of the wide steppes, not ringing true in these parts. The girl seemed to notice it, for she broke off and with something of bravado suddenly burst into the 'International.' The Georgian children joined in.

To be quite honest, this song also

did not seem to fit into the surroundings.

The rain was not disturbed by it.

### *A NINE-YEAR-OLD BOLSHEVIST*

'You get the best view of Moscow from up here, don't you?'

'What is your name really?'

'Shoura. That's a Russian name. You see, I was born in Moscow, but at home I speak German with my parents. It's necessary to know lots of languages, isn't it? Next year I'm going to learn English. English is important.'

'And how old are you, Shoura?'

'Ten——' and after a short hesitation, almost guiltily, '—not quite. Not till December.' And then, with quite vast self-importance, 'But I am a member of the Pioneers already.'

'Great Scott! Then you'll very soon be a Komsomolzin!'

Shoura found my jesting out of place. With great dignity she corrected me: 'That won't be for a long time yet. It's not so simple. To be Komsomolez (a member of the Union of Young Communists) you have to be sixteen.'

'And what are you going to be, Shoura?'

'I shall go to the factory.' This was said with such decision that no one could doubt her intention. 'Have you seen our new ammunition store factory? Great, isn't it? In the big hall they are already working with the new American machines. You see, we got ready ahead of the Plan. But by September we shall have our own machines. Then we shan't have to

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buy the expensive American machines any more. Look out there to the right of the Wireless Station, that's the Factory.'

'But how is it that you know so much about it? Did you learn that at school?'

'At school? Pooh! I've been there. I had a good look at it all.' And with great pride: 'I've been in the Amo too, and in the Electrosawod. And in the clock factory. I've been everywhere.'

'With the school? Does the teacher take you there?'

'Why should we want a teacher for a thing like that? We go by ourselves, we Pioneers. In the afternoons in our free time.'

'And do they let you in without any trouble?'

'Oh, the Works Council manages that all right. To-morrow we are going to the Biochemical.'

'Whatever is that?'

'An institute.'

'But do you know what biochemistry is?'

'No. The professor will explain that to us all right.'

'And why do you want to go to this particular institute?'

'Oh, you see - last week we went to see *Fear*. It's a good play. I have seen it twice. It's being given at the Arts Theatre, by Stanislawski. You should go there.'

'I have seen it. It's really a very interesting play. But did you really understand it all?'

'What is there that I should not understand?' This was said very disdainfully.

'Well, anyway. - That whole story

of the Professor and his relation to the party - the problem——' I hesitate. How am I to explain it to the child. Problem——?'

'The professors have no proletarian class consciousness,' Shoura says in a matter-of-fact voice. 'Because they have never worked in the factories. The one, you know, the father of the little girl, why, he's a frank Counter-Revolutionary. He has never been a worker at all, and has got into the Party by trickery. I am sorry for the little girl. It's unjust that he is not locked up. He has deceived the Workers' Party, and they simply let him go.' After seriously considering the matter for a few moments, she adds, 'Oh, well, on the stage——!' This is said with the contempt of a grown-up person for a mere game.

But in the very next instant Shoura is again a nine-year-old child. She finds young buds to admire, wants me to explain how it is that on this meadow the young grass is growing whilst on that meadow it isn't; what kind of bird is that sitting on the telegraph post - a fine bird, isn't it? And where has it got its nest and how old is the bird, and why doesn't it sing, or perhaps it can't sing at all——

It is with real delight that I enjoy this flood of questions. So she isn't really hopelessly grown up yet, I comfort myself, whilst Shoura trips along by my side, runs to and fro, looks for flowers, engages in a race with a small mongrel.

But my consolation does not endure for long. Suddenly the child stops, and surveys the landscape and the sky with a long glance.

'A lovely day.' She said this quite

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seriously, with matter-of-fact superiority. 'And now I must get home.'

'Home work, eh? Do they give you much to do at home?'

'Not much. But to-morrow I have to give a lecture on Lenin.'

'A lecture? What are you going to talk to them about?'

Shoura gives me a sidelong suspicious look. Am I laughing at her—? Somewhat reluctantly she says, 'Oh, you know all about that all right.' Then importantly, 'I shall talk about Trotskyism.'

I am afraid to ask what the small Shoura means by Trotskyism. So I change the subject: 'Have you ever been in Germany?'

'No. But by the time they have Communism in Germany I shall certainly go there. After the Revolution. When are you going to have a Revolution in Germany?' This is said in a slightly less gracious voice.

'I don't know. Perhaps there won't be one at all—'

'No Revolution—?' The intonation might easily belong to Berlin; I have no difficulty in completing the unspoken sentence: my dear fellow, what kind of an idiot are you?

'It will come, certainly, but it may not be for some time yet,' I defend myself.

'I know; we have great difficulties in Germany. Fascism. And then the Police. I hate the Police.'

'But you've got Police yourselves too.'

'We have no Police, we have only Militia.'

I put an end to the political conversation. 'And at school—for how many hours a day do you go?'

Shoura feels flattered by my interest. She bursts forth:

'For four hours a day. But we are taken as well almost every day to museums and things like that. I am very fond of going to museums. Are you? We have very fine museums in Moscow. Have you been to the Tretjakoff Gallery yet? I liked the picture of the Cossack best. They lived where Dnjeprostroj is now. Many hundred years ago, of course.'

'And in the afternoons you go to factories and write your homework and your lectures—?'

'Not every day.'

'And in the evenings?'

'In the evenings I have my Pioneer work, of course. From seven till nine.'

'And what do you do then?'

'It varies. This month we are inspecting the houses in our district. We check whether all the maid servants go regularly to evening school and whether they learn properly. And how far they have got on with reading and writing. Last month we conducted a campaign against alcohol.'

'However did you do that?'

'It's quite simple. Of course, we know all the workers who drink so much. So we went to them in the evenings when they were at home, and talked with them, and explained to them that they will die soon if they drink so much vodka, and that too much drinking is unproletarian. And to some of them we wrote letters, too. Pioneer work in one word.'

I feel that I am not giving the impression of being so very intelligent, so I try to hide my confusion under a



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superior smile: 'And haven't you ever been thrown out of the factories or houses? Don't they ever beat you?'

For some seconds Shoura stares at me with wide open, surprised eyes.

The child's glance is so un-understanding that I am embarrassed.

'Throw us out — us? But — then I should simply write a letter to the *Pravda*!'

### OVERHEARD

I do not know whether I deceive myself, but it seems to me that the young men, who were my contemporaries, fixed certain principles in their minds, and followed them out to their legitimate consequences, in a way which I rarely witness now. No one seems to have any distinct convictions, right or wrong; the mind is completely at sea, rolling and pitching on the waves of facts and personal experiences. Mr. — is, I suppose, one of the rising young men of the day; yet he went on talking, the other evening, and making remarks with great earnestness, some of which were palpably irreconcilable with each other. He told me that facts gave birth to, and were the absolute ground of, principles; to which I said, that unless he had a principle of selection, he would not have taken notice of those facts upon which he grounded his principle. You must have

a lantern in your hand to give light, otherwise all the materials in the world are useless, for you cannot find them; and if you could, you could not arrange them. 'But then', said Mr. —, '*that* principle of selection came from facts!' — 'To be sure!' I replied; 'but there must have been again an antecedent light to see those antecedent facts. The relapse may be carried in imagination backwards for ever, — but go back as you may, you cannot come to a man without a previous aim or principle.' He then asked me what I had to say to Bacon's induction: I told him I had a good deal to say, if need were; but that it was perhaps enough for the occasion to remark, that what he was evidently taking for the Baconian induction was a mere *deduction* — a very different thing — S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

# The Warning

by Mary Butts

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**T**HIS happened in the kind of house people live in who used not to live in houses like that, who were inclined to be rude to the kind of people who lived in them. Yet now they have had to live in such houses themselves, it is the houses who have changed more than they have. By a kind of spiritual modification.

So it was not on ancient stones that the sun shone, nor chimneys warmed by generations of fires that the sea salted with spray. Only in situation the house might have been built by a king, a Ludwig of Bavaria, with the sea for play-boy, whose imagination had led him to make his palace of art, instead of perched up on mountains, under the sea: —

‘ . . . bowers  
Where the ocean powers  
Sit on their pearlèd thrones.  
Through the coral woods —’

It is strange that none of the world’s play-boys have ever thought to do that; yet this house was set in such a place where the most enterprising of them might have meditated it. There, three hundred feet below, the full Atlantic poured its waters in and out of a cup. There you enjoyed night and day the entire conversation of the sea. There it sang, swore, snored, shouted, whispered, yelled. ‘Dancing

floor of the sun,’ there, on a reef where contending waters met, it leaped in seven waves, whose hair shook out the prisms of seven rainbows. There, round that reef, the pattern the tide draws in a white line takes on the shape of the Bull, the one beast off a cattle-boat that staggered up on to its black back and, bellowing, faced the ravine of the green water beasts; and there in the still seething his outline rises before a storm.

There, at the pull of the moon, the tides draw out half a mile. Draw back across lion-bright sand, a delicate flat-race; sea babies at the water’s lip, coral and crimson weed and a starring of shells, pearl beads and glass and yellow stone. In every colour but the sea colours. Each one smaller than the last. A perfectness.

There, in a world jutting with empty stones, and airy as though you stood everywhere at a great height, the cliffs have clothed themselves; and you look down or you look up into a crosswork of gorse and bracken, blackberry and briony, threaded with the drip of streams. There, all summer, the rose-campion waves a scarf in its face exactly the opposite in colour to the sea. There, in the middle of the bay, the sand has blown itself together into one place, a dune thrust out from the land, a child carried upright in the

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belly of the earth; dunes the couch-grass has covered, the grass that never stands close enough together, so that between each blade you can see the skin-pale sand.

There, round about the house at night, the hedgehogs squeak; and night and day, in every tone of voice, the sea says out loud its stupendous secret, which is the meaning of everything, the tuning-in for the music of the spheres; and men often listen attentively, understand, and instantly forget all about it; while a foot above their heads the gulls mew like cats.

There, it was only natural that with the summer the friends of the two friends, the husband and wife who lived in the house, should come down to see them. Inevitable, too, that they should arrive all at once and spread themselves about the village, in the tar-and-whitewash cottages of the fishermen; or at the ancient inn, now pretending to be an hotel; or plant themselves out under canvas in the corners of a field, under a stone hedge, beside a planting of willows, whose green wands, cut in autumn to weave crab-pots, quivered 'upon the wild sea-banks' in summer catpaws off the sea.

Equally the husband and wife were glad that they should come. But with the pleasure went the knowledge that there was friendship and friendship, friends and friends. Their intimacy with each had been a separate act, a special creation, extended over time. Would they all instantly harmonize with each other? They would not. It was a question for delicate arrangement, for judicious pairing.

The naval officer and one of the painters. Not the other. The stage-and-hunting woman with the sailor, and the tow-haired politician whose job it was to restore ruins, rebuild for very different inhabitants the ruins of past West-country life. She would think his politics a boy's barbarities; know his strength and his kindness for a man's. The journalist was for all the pretty women. There were not quite enough to go round.

'Except,' said Marcia, the wife, nibbling at her pen, 'Caroline, with two babies in tow, and the divorce she doesn't want——'

Julian, her husband, said: 'Why doesn't she bring a nurse?'

'It's the new idea of mother-love. Besides the expense. You can't get one here——' There rose before their eyes the picture of Caroline, slender and very young, her wide tormented eyes, her tangle of curls, the delicate coltishness of movement that young maternity was turning into grace, that desertion and sorrow had made a little wild. A creature made to adore and be adored — now torn defenceless from such petty shelter as the graceful scamp had afforded her when he made her his wife. The graceful scamp would end the graceless scoundrel, as the wise Frenchman had prophesied. The lovely lass — what distressed both husband and wife was the stamp he had left already on the girl's delicate wax. Along with the innocence that made them sigh was an ignorance that appalled. Corrupted innocence can turn into ignorance, a damnable state of the soul.

While the immediate question was how to blend a hurt girl and two

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babies with a number of people who were strangers to her; and the men strange to children in any form. Men are rarely conscious of exquisiteness in the young, shapes of delight that seem to them to combine the dangers of a live bomb with the disadvantages that it cannot be thrown at anyone. No, Caroline must have her special hours, a separate play-time.

This arrangement broke down. Not wholly, not disastrously; but since the same plan had to be followed with most of the rest of their friends, the summer became more and more a series of time-spans, conditioned by a constant and vigilant effort to bring people together and to keep people apart; and inevitably the last became the more important, and separation the chief term of their hospitality. The wide porch up the steps with the green benches and deck chairs, the summer's out-door room, where the earth turned over on its side and fell away down to the sea through flowers — half cocktail bar, half restaurant — now seemed the place where everyone else was happy and they were not.

In their bedroom, in candle light and midsummer dusk, Julian said: 'I don't see where our fun comes in. They are all right, with the view, and the tea or the drinks or whatever it is, while we keep wondering whether someone who doesn't get on with somebody else'll take it into their heads to call; and if they do I have to take them along to admire the stream — And now that eldest of Caroline's found its way here by itself and its mother will come and look for it, just when Toby and Violaine have settled

down side by side, telling each other about their operations——'

Toby was the sailor. And Violaine. It was not quite easy for either of them to speak temperately about Violaine — the tall woman, who had been brought there a month before by another friend, who had gone away and left her there. Much as a pretty launch, dressed for a regatta, might give tow to a racing yacht, its masts stripped rising to the heavens, in that building for speed inside the winds which makes such a ship the tallest thing in nature.

Together they were sure of one thing — that in Violaine was a gift, a peculiar finding of treasure. Box out of some rare earth, and inside it something at once familiar and rare. While friendship was in its second state of crystallization. The first recognition over — would it harden out into its pure shape? Was it a late frost crystal? Or a superb flower in a cut glass, to be hurried on to the fire, so as not to shame it with its beauty's miserable decay? Too early to tell, but not if they could help it. For with her went, more than an ambience or a memory, a statement that was the opposite, among other things, of the outside of their house. Memory of shapes that had once 'composed the beauties' of all three, forms like lost moulds, dies for their stamp; and to have Violaine near them like a new mint; who were all three exiles, and from a life that it seems is more and more passing away. To build a Civitas Dei in such minds as theirs, lay up its pattern for itself. Until such time as it will return.

It was also perfectly plain that a

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gulf existed between Caroline and Violaine, a gulf they had made no attempt to bridge. Why not? For reasons that made them blush. And then blush for blushing. So hard it is for one kind of person to enter with the inward being into the life of another order of society. Yet that was what Violaine herself had done when she left her Border castles and the dark ruin of her house, her salmon rods and her horses to plunge into the world of the stage, not as actor, but as spectator; and her friends half great persons of the world, half women players with their lovers and their sorrows. A world of which the wife knew little and the husband much. As he knew less of what his wife knew well, the world of what is called the Young Intellectuals, the Intelligentsia. A name that has given itself away. Yet she had lived it once, lived through it very thoroughly. Was in a position to judge young entry – the kind of lad Caroline had married – as Violaine the puppy she was walking, or her husband the quality of his own art.

So, with so much enlightenment about, it should not have been hard to adjust, and tactless of La Bruyère to wake up his little platitude, asleep in the attics of memory, and send it sauntering through their heads: '*Rien n'est aussi difficile que la commerce des hommes*' – What was to be done about Caroline? When surely the only question should be: What was to be done for Caroline? Caroline, ardent and sweet, quick-witted and true, a lass with a delicate air? What also had been done to Caroline – taken, a child from some awful home in the middle of God knew where, from a place not

marked on any of their maps. There Arthur had found her, enchanted her, married her; led her a dreadful life. It was pure Prunella. Made her the mother of two lovely children; spent too much. Was unfaithful to her; encouraged her to be unfaithful to him. Left her penniless. Taught her the fashionable immoralities and the slang of cheap intellect, the formula of bolshevized behaviour. Substitution for such simple faiths she had not believed in much. Left her to the separation she loathed.

Quick-witted, such education had not made of her an utter mess, held by such simple loyalties as duty to her children and love of him. Grief also at the harm he had done himself. Not bad, but not enough for a *credo* in the world in which she found herself. Had she sufficient in herself to face her life alone?

The husband and the wife, listening to all this, believed that she might have.

Yet, like a term from another series, suddenly intruded, star-dust from the tail of a very different comet, they also observed that there could be no introduction of Caroline to Violaine.

Reasons presented themselves. Violaine's health, her trigger-set nerves. Her unawareness of the existence of small children, too young to sit a pony or throw a fly. Still less of children whose parents had lived in the fear of that new disease, the Repressions, more dreaded than ever was the small-pox, for which the prophylactic was behaviour which would have sent their parents off to learn the habits of civilization in

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disgrace. Nurse's business, only there were now no nurses to do the rough work of licking into shape. (How far has economic pressure given point to the theory which banished nurse, to replace her by overstrung young parents, whose fatigue their young, with the demon perception of infancy, know instantly how to play up?)

This took them some of the way. But what about the starry evenings, when the babies were in bed, and the terrace room hummed with voices and the clink of glasses, and three hundred feet below to the purring of the sea? Waiting for the moon to rise, watching the stars come out, when 'the sounds of beauty flowed and trembled' as from inside the house Julian played Mozart. Hour of the moths, when they brushed by, each with a lion's head, black eyes and white fur. A mystery. Or a baby snail, his still transparent house in black and coral rings. A young hedgehog, tender quilled. The toad. These were their night-callers, while the faint coloured stocks were giving out their perfume in little floods borne on the night breeze off the sea.

No, Caroline had better not come if Violaine was there. Was it because they were all so much older, the war-generation with its unspoken secrets, that complete assumption of a common experience? In part. Or because they were all such old friends? Not all of them were.

'You can't go on feeling sorry for a person all the time,' said Julian.

'She loves us too much,' said his wife suddenly.

'She kisses me too often,' he answered simply — 'outside the Post

Office with all the garage men grinning. Hangs round my neck——'

'That's true,' she said, 'she twines.' Reflecting on the counsel handed down from mother to daughter through the ages, how only to pretend to be a vine.

'It's not *natural*——'

His wife said, 'It's Arthur. You don't realize — husbands train their young wives. And when I first met him his chief asset was the way he sank on to the floor at our feet, and looked up through his eyelashes. The way every woman of whatever size was encouraged to lean against him like Leighton's "Wedded." I did. He never forgave me when I told him to stop when he put on weight, and you heard the bump of his *dérrière* on the floor.

'What I mean is,' said Julian, 'someone ought to tell her *when* to do these things. Not with a village watching. Or,' he added candidly, 'anyone.'

This did not take them much further, though agreeable in itself. Then, little by little, there became perceptible a certain restlessness in Caroline at the mention of Violaine. A touch of curiosity; eyes that once or twice implored. While in their scales the other pan moved a little when one day Violaine asked:

'Who's that pretty little woman with the children I saw coming out of your gate?'

It is easy to answer a question one has waited to hear, easy to draw a picture of Caroline, try to elicit interest, sympathy. Violaine without doubt could be useful to the child. Violaine was saying:

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'Of course, it's pretty hopeless looking after these young things who've got their lives into a mess. Besides, they always turn in the end and blame you.' Easy to protest that, for once this was impossible. Easy too to bore Violaine. It was dropped. Easiest of all, when the wistful look came again into Caroline's eyes, to explain how useful Violaine might be, with introductions to designers – and, privately, to a world more seemly, than Arthur had ever chosen to show his wife. Part of a further plan came in there – to lift the child out of the intellectual slum, the mental house of ill-fame this young pioneer of our future society had offered her for home.

'And when her life is settled, I shall tell her about her bearing——' Which done – and accepted – they saw the pretty ship set sail again, dressed for a blue day and a following breeze. *Départ pour Cythère*, as they hoped.

It was two days later that the wif was led to the indiscretion which brought the delicate structure of their lives crashing down, with a harsher sound than a card-house toppling. Compare it to a lid lifted off a simmering pot, showing under the bubbles a stew not designed for human food. Caterpillars out of the garden or inedible snails, and for herbs a few rank weeds. (Lately a fleet of henbanes had sprung up on the waste land outside the garden gate. A sending from Pan knew where, set on empty soil, as though even the weeds feared them; henbane from whose grey leaves the hyoscine is distilled that Doctor Crippen gave to Mrs. Crippen. . . . Henbanes, on

which and on no other plants a swarm of black caterpillars was riddling to rags. A cycle in nature which struck them as sinister, no matter to what terms in science it could be reduced.)

It was late afternoon when she turned to Caroline and said:

'My angel, you are passing Violaine Standish's house. Would you leave this note?' And saw her up the garden path, a lovely child in each hand.

——'It's only to say I'll be done to-morrow for a cocktail at six.'

This to her husband. Twenty-four hours later she heard the latch of Violaine's gate click behind her. She walked lightly, whistling, the hostess dropped and the housewife, the mother, the wife and the apprentice British matron. A guest mounted the path, a guest come home to a meeting sweet with tradition. To a friend in the making. Over the edge of the ring of Violaine's high bearing, into air it gave power to breathe. The door of Mrs. Penrose's house stood open, the oldest house in St. Enys. In Violaine's sitting-room, in the low window, two arm-chairs were drawn up. Twenty yards off the sea broke in a light thunder. Flood tide after a Biscay storm, its back-wash sweeping the coast, line upon line of breakers marching in under the lightest breeze, a limpid sky.

She sat down and opened a book. Upstairs Violaine would be changing shorts for trousers, dinner-dress at St. Enys for a woman slight as a larch and as tall. Casing her tanned legs in grey flannel, cut and creased like a man's. Running a heavy comb through her hair, brushed back in short waves, the

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tiny sea of brass she carried on her head. The arms in her checked shirt would be bare, arms that matched her legs, the wrists so turned as to make the senses ache. Only the tips of the fingers cut perhaps too short, a fraction too square.

She heard her enter the room. Half-turned – to the sight of something that instantly cut her smile, held it half shaped. For what after seemed a very long time. For Violaine at first did not come and sit down beside her. It was she who turned, slewed half-way round, while Violaine stood beside the table piled with glasses and books and records, her eyes on the high seas, her brown nostrils wide.

She was saying:

‘Who in hell was that little woman you sent to see me last night?’ Marcia knew instantly catastrophe when it arrives, crashing out of the invisible into the visible world like the clown out of the cupboard or the pantomime cat down the chimney; or at the play, the hidden witness to all impossible secrets when he knocks over the screen.

‘I sent no one. I asked the little Caroline Adams to leave a note on you about this evening. That was all.’

‘That doesn’t interest me. Perhaps you would like to hear what she did. She chose to come late last night, as I was going to bed. Yes, then, with a howling child on each hand. Asked to see me. Got past Mrs. Penrose, who knows my orders. Gave me your note and sat down unasked. Yes, stayed. A friend of yours I had in decency to receive.

——‘Sat where you are sitting now. What could I do? Took hold of my hand and stroked it. Said she’d been

longing to know me; had watched me from the beach. Told me she admired my hair, the way I moved. Told me she thought me beautiful. Asked me about my health – intimate questions; and was I doing this for myself, and did I know how to do that?

——‘And all this time the children were whining and yelling: “Mother, we want to go home. Mother, who is this lady? Mother, can’t we go home to tea?” and running round the room and spilling my cigarettes and messing about the records, and falling down and shrieking, and starting to play and starting to shriek. First one and then the other. Then one got hold of the back of my chair and the other little brute hurled itself on me, and they both grabbed and pushed and fell about and kept asking questions. And one got hold of my jade figurines and the crystal and threw them down; and all their mother did was to tell me that *you* said children should be allowed to handle precious things to get the feel of them young. I can see you allowing anyone’s brats to paw your things——

——‘And all this time she was cooing and stroking, and I had to sit still, knowing the next second I should insult her. How should I know how to control such people? A friend of yours, I could hardly kick her out of the house. But, my God, I shall if she tries it again! The slut! I’m not surprised that her husband left her. How did he ever come to marry her? These little girls have nothing to do but get hold of some man. And, Marcia, I warn you if she tries it on again, there will be trouble. I’ll not answer for myself if I have any more



## Mary Butts

of that insolence. And I can't help wanting to know what you mean by knowing such people and letting them loose on people who are defenceless because they are your friends——'

Defenceless? The storm went on, not shrill, high and clear, deadly with its steel edge. An edge to which Marcia felt her brow was exposed, bare. Or was it her eyes?

And 'Steady, Violaine' was all she found to say. 'I was a fool to send her with that note. For that I apologize.' ('I am paying too much for this—for that child's folly. We guessed Violaine capable of this. Yes, be a little formal——') 'If I had dreamed she was so foolish, I would never have let——' ('All perfectly useless. That's not Violaine's point. What is? That she must whip herself into a fury, ultimately to punish herself. Long-tortured body, long-thwarted pride. Called nerves. A contact she loathed. We know all that. Oh, damn and blast the little fool!—— What is she saying?')

'I can't see why you waste your time on such people. A mother! Fine sort of a mother, keeping those wretched kids up to all hours, howling in other people's rooms. Poor little devils—fine chance they'll have.

'And she's not the innocent little sweetness you both think. She had her reasons for coming. Those morons have. I only want to warn you she'll get nothing out of me; that if she tries it again, I'll not answer for my temper——'

('Is she answering for it? It's no good my repeating and repeating. What am I listening to now?') Violaine was sitting beside her, visible

only in profile, her hard brown hands making gestures of tearing and destruction. Exhibiting something destroyed to scorn. Now she was asking how well Caroline knew the other men of the party; men she had referred to by their nick-names and who had asked her to call Commander Norton 'Nibs' and give details about his inside? Marcia writhed. These 'imposings' which are more deadly than vice, the want of training that hustled youth and sorrow behind a screen.

Violaine was perfectly right. Perfectly wrong also; only her wrongness did not matter in comparison; her rightness was essential. The subtle contract broken on which human association depends. Which is implied when you say: 'people do not do these things.' And where was Friendship's Garland, the wreath she and Julian had made with such splendid flowers and nailed up over Violaine's door? Or the posy of gentle blossoms with which they would have comforted Caroline? Not the roses and the bays for Violaine's proud head, but such plants as columbine and love-in-a-mist. Love-lies-bleeding—— Oh, damn love—— Stop protesting, however coolly. Walk out over the scattered wreath as lightly as you can. Don't stop to pick it up.

Marcia was on her feet now, making—not excuses—but sincere and aloof apologies to a stranger. To a tall bony woman, dressed as a man, flung now in a deep chair, her face lined with long-endured atrocities of the body and the spirit. Cause or effect? Eternal nagging problem. Violaine's body was like a sword used for stabbing—ultimately herself.

## The Warning

'I can let myself out.' Only half an hour before she had heard the garden gate click behind her, advancing towards that house with joy. Now she was walking up the cliff road in strong sunshine, in light become a burden, as it does when the interior light has been turned off; quenched in another's darkness.

\* \* \*

She sat beside her husband, in the terrace-room. Aghast they looked down on to the roof of the house below, where Mrs. Penrose kept the best lodgings in St. Enys; the house with its strip of lawn the road divided from the sea. Up through the gulf of air the sea purred like a cat. Julian said:

'When you got back so soon, I could see that something was wrong. From the way you walked up the road——'

——'Two perfectly good garlands gone west. We shall doubtless make fresh ones, but——' He finished for her:

——'*C'est toujours moins involontaire.*'

Later, in his evening bath, she heard him singing, the theme-song of their household, of marriage, in times of stress:

*'Never mind if things look glum  
You're sure to find there's worse to come —  
Every silver lining has a dark cloud  
inside——'*

Smelling agreeably of violet salts, he sat up in bed, the candle light crossing the last midsummer light, reflection of the sun on the Atlantic

disc, as the planet rolled over, along with Mercury and Arcturus and the rest.

'Find me the bright side of this,' she asked. 'What's the bright side of a hollow tooth?' he said, finishing the quotation. Suddenly she sat up also, clasping her knees: 'You are angriest with Violaine and I with Caroline——'

'Well, haven't we agreed it was stupidity made her do it, and curiosity and Arthur; that Violaine's forgotten more about manners than she ever knew; and hasn't Violaine got bats in her belfry and haven't we always known that?'

'Agreed, but don't you see — you can have Caroline for yours — but Violaine was one of my Muses, and in this life you want the Muses to be their very selves, not turning on a little hedge-sparrow for singing out of tune?'

——'And what are we going to do about it?' A question one partner does not always like to be asked. Julian said nothing. There was silence. She sat still straighter up:

——'I know. One thing is true — this that has happened is the greatest of all cautionary tales. I shall make it into part of our saga and our children's children shall tell it, and the awfulness of its warning shall go with them from the very first time they go out into the world.'

'So, like a good housekeeper, you'll see that none of it is wasted——'

He drew her down beside him.

# Vestigia

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THESE memories are mostly confined to the 'nineties; but perhaps 1886 is not too far off the margin. It was in the spring of this year that my parents unexpectedly called for me at my day school in a hansom cab and took me to Hammersmith, where I was immensely excited by the Boat Race. I shall never forget seeing a huge advertisement on a launch following the crews, with *Tit-Bits* on it. I asked my mother what *Tit-Bits* were, and she replied in rather shocked tones that it was a very vulgar paper and that I had better not ask any questions about it. To this day I never see the cover of that most respectable weekly without feeling that there must be some vague scandal about the contents.

In 1891 I was gowned at Eton by Vice-Provost Wilder, who was by then well in his nineties. The ceremony took place in the beautiful old College Library, and I remember the solemnity with which the old gentleman, who looked as if he had returned from the next world, pronounced the Latin formula. Just as he had finished a large clock struck the hour in the most mellow and impressive tones. Within a few weeks of the ceremony I saw the ex-Kaiser on the famous occasion when he was nearly killed by a horse, which did not like the firing of one rifle by itself when all the other rifles clicked in a preliminary volley. I have never in

my life seen so wonderful a display of horsemanship. Soon after this he passed within a few feet of me and I remember wondering why his face was green. I had never before, and have never since, seen a green human face. It was of course not a bright green but more the colour of a duck's egg.

Two years later I was taken to the first night of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* for the purpose of exciting my youthful sympathy with women who incurred the penalties of ostracism owing to lapses from chastity which would not be blamed in a man. Forty years ago the moral atmosphere was very different from that in which we now live, and it is useful to have so definite a memory of a climate of opinion which is not likely to return so long as our civilization lasts. Even then, however, there was considerable indignation at Ernest Vizetelly being in prison for translating Zola's novels at the very moment when that eminent novelist was being entertained at the Guildhall.<sup>1</sup> I remember the small dark figure of M. Zola standing in the middle of a very enthusiastic group, from which I derived the rather erroneous impression that French novelists were admired in the City of London. It was certainly a very different reception which Alphonse Daudet experienced at Eton,

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it was this incident which evoked Lola's memorable slogan, '*Quelle canaille sont les respectables !*'

## Vestigia

where he strolled through the School Yard with a friend of mine who could scarcely understand a word of French, whereas, had the visitor been a Colonial Bishop, there would have been a great deal of pomp and circumstance and a military display by the Eton Volunteers.

### CURZON AT OXFORD

In my Balliol days I saw many outside celebrities, including Lord Curzon and Rudyard Kipling. I remember Curzon's address in Balliol Hall just before he went out to India as Viceroy, and although from subsequent knowledge I naturally admire his character and abilities, I must confess that never in my life was I so impressed by the vulgarity of any oration. It was the kind of speech that the ex-Kaiser might have made substituting Balliol for Germany. Kipling had a most uncanny appearance, and the impression that he gave of seeing the very bones of anyone he looked at was almost sinister.

### OXFORD CHARACTERS

Oxford in those days still had a few 'characters' of the old-fashioned sort, among whom perhaps the most striking were York Powell, Robinson Ellis, and Higgs. Certainly Higgs was the most remarkable in appearance, and I shall never forget the dexterity with which he taught me Pass Logic at the expense of his landlady, whose replies to his questions (perhaps designedly) abounded in logical fallacies; he also spat into the fire of the Balliol Common Room with an unerring aim over the bald pates of the learned men who were sitting in front of him. He

suffered considerably from bronchial asthma; but so long as he could spit he could breathe. *Spuo ergo sum!* Matthew Arnold points out that the root meaning of *sum* is 'I breathe.'

Robinson Ellis was a much less vivid figure; but I used sometimes to have some long walks with him, and acquired an astonishing amount of information about the less printable habits and customs of the ancient Romans, male and female. York Powell was in some ways the most distinguished and jovial figure of my time, and in spite of his bohemian habits was the last Don in Oxford to wear a top-hat. His rooms at midnight in Christ Church were full of books and manuscripts and drinking vessels, and apparently his rooms in Bedford Park were of much the same appearance, judging from the awestruck gossip which sometimes filtered through about them from curious Dons' wives who would try to peer through the windows.

My Oxford memories end in a sort of set-piece at the Sheldonian Theatre. This was the occasion on which Cecil Rhodes had been invited to take his degree, as to which Oxford was sharply divided. No doubt some of the Dons knew of the famous will, under which a shower of wealth was soon to descend on the University. Others like Strachan-Davidson said that if you had asked a lady to dinner you could not well cancel the invitation because she had been involved in a public scandal, and of course the connection of Cecil Rhodes with the Raid (whether proved or not) was certainly in the nature of a public scandal. Liberals, however, including Edward Caird, then Master of Balliol, felt that to confer a degree on Cecil

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Rhodes in June, 1899, was an intolerable stumbling-block to the British statesmen who were working for peace in South Africa. Such at any rate was my view, and I think that anyone looking back on the history of the time will agree that far more trouble should have been taken than was taken to achieve a possible settlement, and also that such a gesture as giving Cecil Rhodes his degree on that occasion must have caused much misunderstanding in Europe. I have always detested the Boers; but it is not soothing to reflect that our unfortunate countrymen are governed by them as the result of casual diplomacy and that this Dutch supremacy is the aftermath of precious lives squandered in humiliating warfare.

Full of what I considered a laudable desire to prevent the disaster which followed, I went with a friend who is

to-day not only a Professor but also a King's Counsel and a General, to the Sheldonian Theatre, armed with a megaphone, and through that instrument both of us alternately asked some rather searching but disrespectful questions of Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes became rather purple in the face, and finally he, accompanied by the present King and Queen and Lord Kitchener, retired from the stage. I have always been told that during the retirement Rhodes's distinguished companions said that they would not take their degrees if Rhodes did not take his, and a *claque* was hastily organized in the Theatre. After listening to loud cries of 'Don't mind what the Balliol man says,' Rhodes took his degree and won the day; but the cost of his triumph to the British Empire and to civilization can only be conjectured. '*Virtus post nummos*' does not invariably pay!

# Hyde Park

by George Buchanan

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**H**YDE PARK – great tree-dotted area where a city comes up to breathe. Everything is here, every kind of person, in every kind of mood. A place of drama, love, lust, snobbishness, reminiscence, and staring.

In the morning it is dull; on sunny days brilliant; on afternoons idle; at dusk noisy. What do we use it for? For an old man's and a dog's exercise, a baby's airing, a lover's embrace on the grass, a saunter between appointments. This is the city's face when it is not actually occupied with business. It reflects London at leisure – the largest city of the world in its garden – charming and hideous, silent or loquacious as a soap-box orator.

From the earliest hour it is populated. At dawn, even in winter, swimmers plunge into the Serpentine, quite gaily, as if this were enjoyable. Later in the day perambulators are the chief feature, with nursemaids and dogs. Elderly gentlemen – R.N. retired or office retired (having received an inscribed clock from colleagues) – potter about, interested in the new daffodils. In the Row, on the brown sand, are horses, with tossing tails – bouncing girls astride. Here is a stocky rider with puffy cheeks and wide, rather foolish mouth: John Bull himself still surviving!

There are also seagulls flying all day over the smooth Serpentine – expecting bread which people throw. They make a melancholy noise.

Once an English queen, Caroline, George II.'s wife, had this lake made from pools in the bed of the River Westbourne, and she used to walk beside it with her maids of honour, famous for their beauty. A clever queen – who was on intelligent speaking terms with Isaac Newton. A lonely queen – running across the gardens to meet her husband after his long absences.

It was she who gave orders that Kensington Gardens should be opened, on one day a week to the public 'in full dress.' Does she ever walk, a wraith, nowadays seeing strange people in informal modern clothes – or without clothes at all on Lansbury's Lido?

Does she see the dark rank of motor-cars drawn up in the road by the Magazine, with people like dummies inside? They just sit, they make no real contact with this really pleasant park. In one car is a fat woman eating a fig. In another (a Rolls), on the back seat, sit three elderly ladies whose heads have fallen back at different angles, their mouths open – asleep! Passers smile. They are posed for a painting by Hogarth.

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What a lot about cars! Two men walk past in a serious discussion: 'The engine is not as good as the Sunbeam. That's what I have against them. . . .'

Other voices:

A nursemaid, at intervals, to a boy on a toy bicycle: 'Be careful, Robin, it's dangerous.'

A pretty child in a pink coat: 'Cats lick themselves, don't they, mummy?'

A lady with a 1900 hat: 'My father was a bishop. My uncle was a peer's nephew.'

Three rotund policewomen in conference: 'She 'as straight eyebrows. Thin and straight they are.' (Description of some romantic villainess of the park no doubt.)

Here is a fountain with a stone woman as guardian angel. Unfortunately her nose has been eaten off by weather; she looks as if she had a painful disease. Standing near, an orator says loudly that people ought to study science and live intelligently. Not far away another louder-voiced person calls for immediate repentance by everybody.

Loiterers stare, listen, walk on, apparently unaffected.

Every day an ancient man with white beard gives bread crumbs to sparrows. Two well-dressed little girls rush up, he gives them crumbs for the birds. There is a Press photographer near-by. The little girls turn towards him, smiling eagerly, holding up the crumbs, but heedless of the birds. They stand in one position, waiting. . . . Evidently, at the age of six, one is alive nowadays to the uses of publicity.

Dogs are highly important visitors. Many people come only as their ser-

vants, to give them exercise. For hours a woman throws a rubber ball along the grass for a Chow or Alsatian to fetch. Sometimes dogs bark a long time, very noisily, but nobody seems to be irritated.

An old colonel, with pink face and white moustaches, studies the thermometer at the gate for a long time. It is a nice Spring day, but he wishes to know what its temperature is officially.

The park trees, at certain times of the year, are beautiful. There are vistas across the twinkling lake, rowed over by little boats, which many of us treasure mentally and think of when someone mentions London.

Young men come here and reflect on notables of history and of ambition – and young women reflect on fashions and how they pass or, worse, still linger on at the wrong time.

From the lake, as you sit, comes the drowsy noise of oars in rowlocks all afternoon; a murmur of voices. In the boats are hotel-boys in uniform; some French waiters who do not row as expertly as they pour out wine; some young unemployed keeping fit at this, the finest, welfare centre in London.

Later, when the offices close, there will be athletic maidens rowing too.

Two men converse on a bench.

A. My philosophy is a melancholy sanity.

B. Is it?

A. Yes. Like this. You look at the state of things and see no reason. It's all a beastly mess. It makes you melancholy . . . (*an impressive pause*). . . . But you'd be more wretched if you didn't get on with some sort of life. Realizing that is only common sense;

## Hyde Park

it's sanity. Hence (*flourish of the right hand*) melancholy sanity.

B. Quite. . . . Have you any matches?

Many look anxious. They are occupied with pinprick worries about making ends meet. Several nights have passed in wakeful 'turning things over' – which is the modern melancholy. Many people, tormented by over-moderate means, do not become philosophic or religious, but merely pale-faced and empty-eyed.

Some of these walking on the paths are in the thick of personal tragedy. Yet, even when suffering the worst, it is still possible on a Spring day to enjoy and taste the minor details of existence. . . . a colour of a passing dress . . . a swan dipping its neck in the cold water of the lake . . .

*Tired inhabitants, listen.  
A pang of Spring  
Makes trees green, yourselves  
Greener, a new thing.  
Look, actual sunshine  
Falls on bald pates.  
Smile, be smarter, feel like  
Posh fashion plates.*

If Queen Caroline walked again, to-day, she would meet a honeymoon couple from the Midlands. Hardly speaking, they have already walked three times around the lake, she carrying his cap with the yellow lining. Now they take 'snaps' of one another on a metal chair. Afterwards they sit side by side, watching the ducks. This is an extract from the bride's conversation:

'Is he? Mm . . . mm . . . yes . . . mm . . . (*rising inflection*). Is it? Yes . . . mm . . .'

Their marriage will be a happy one.

In the water which they stare at, Shelley's Harriet drowned herself one hundred years ago.

Dusk falls.

The mood is altered. The park loses its morning respectability; and becomes slightly disreputable.

Often a band, dressed in red, plays popular airs. Two tired city lovers listen. They sit side by side reading the same newspaper together. His head is against her fur-collar.

Views of life:

A young army officer confides to a friend: 'You see, I speak to the men as if I was just one of themselves. They like that. And I take an interest in their games, et cetera. They tell me about their wives. . . . They're really just like children. . . .'

'You're wonderful, Claud.'

A woman speaks:

'Poor Jack! He lost his wife two months ago, and he can't realize it yet. He told me he often got on to a bus in the evening by himself and asked for two tickets.'

Evening advances. Cross-word puzzles are put away; strollers turn homewards; more policemen are about.

In the sky, above the trees, is a half-moon, like the heraldic crescent on an Eastern banner; many very remote stars.

Two people parting. 'See you anon.' 'Safe home.' 'Give us a tinkle on the 'phone some time.'

Cartons, empty cigarette cases, bits of newspaper – these remain, showing where the feet of humanity have passed.



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Queen Caroline, after the gates are closed, has the place to herself again. Ghost of a formal, witty and sensual age – herself most innocent – she is no

doubt troubled by the crowds of to-day and bemoans a London changing into something she can never hope to understand.

### OVERHEARD

THAT legislation is iniquitous which sets laws in conflict with the common and unsophisticated feelings of our nature. If I were a clergyman in a smuggling town I would *not* preach against smuggling. I would not be made a sort of clerical revenue officer. Let the Government, which by absurd duties fosters smuggling, prevent it itself, if it can. How could I show my hearers the immorality of going twenty miles in a boat, and honestly buying with their money a keg of brandy, except by a long deduction which they would not understand? But were I in a place where wrecking went on, see if I would preach on anything else!—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

SOME folks apply epithets as boys do in making Latin verses. When I first looked upon the fells of the Clyde, I was unable to find a word to express my feelings. At last, a man, a stranger to me, who arrived about the same time, said: – ‘How majestic!’ – (It was the precise term, and I turned round and was saying – ‘Thank you, Sir! That *is* the exact word for it’ – when he added *eodem flatu*.) – ‘Yes! how very *pretty*!’—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1827.

THE English have a morbid habit of petting and praising foreigners of any sort, to the unjust disparagement of their own worthies.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1832.

# Death Comes for the Flute Player

by Allston A. Kisby

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A murderer's PAST is one eternal PRESENT.—*Talfourd*.

IN the flagged courtyard two hundred pairs of childish feet tramp to the harsh 'Left right, left right' of Lieutenant Rentzel, of His Majesty's Grenadiers. His Prussian Majesty in person, a fat uncouth figure in a burgher's dark clothes, watches gloomily from the terrace. He gnaws his thumb, scowling at the children as they file by him.

'Halt!'

'Corporal Frederick, again you are out of step.'

Corporal Frederick drops his wooden musket, which, light as it is, makes his arms ache. He turns an agonized face towards his father. The five-year-old child is whey-faced, slightly crook-backed, weak and ailing from some insidious malady the doctors can neither discover nor cure. The King recognizes no physical infirmity. He knows of only one medicine—the cudgel. His Royal Majesty reaches for his cane, and in a moment the boy's shrill screams ring through the courtyard. . . .

On a fine August morning in the year 1784 the old man rode out to the Silesian manoeuvres. Accompanying him were His Royal Highness the Duke of York, General La Fayette, Lord Cornwallis, scores of lesser fry, followed by an enormous entourage.

The flute-player was then seventy-two. The miracle was that he had lived so long, for during the past thirty years he had abused his insignificant physique almost beyond belief. It was a marvel that he had survived the hazard of one of his campaigns. In the Seven Years' War he had undergone the rigours and hardships of the field with less consideration for his bodily comfort than the meanest of his men. His bed was an iron cot, sometimes a blanket on wet earth. After the war he had his little soldier's cot transferred to the palace because he found it impossible to rest his weary limbs in the great beds of the royal household. He spent whole days in the saddle in the worst of weathers, perched like a tattered old falcon on his huge

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black mare. Before Schweidnitz he had lived for five months in water-logged trenches, where a stream 'which served the double purpose of washing and drinking' flowed under his bed.

He had an aversion to water. For many years he never bathed or washed. A dampened towel was suffered to touch his face once a day. Water, said the philosopher, was an unnecessary luxury, and too frequent washing impoverished the blood. Constant exposure to wind and rain, sun and frost had given him a brick-red complexion, lined and furrowed and blotched with ingrained dirt.

His clothes were in keeping. Once when Catt, his valet, brought him half a dozen new pairs of ruffles from Berlin, he deliberately cut them in halves and provided himself with a dozen pairs.

'What need have I of these long ruffles? I do not require them to be long or beautiful; you must have noticed that I have the bad habit of cleaning my pen on my ruffles. I am not particular. Look at my boots. You cannot say they are very elegant, or that they are made of the best European leather, but they suit me. And my coat; I tore it here at Schmirnitz, and it was mended with white thread. My hat matches the rest of my clothing. It, too, is well-worn and old, and I like it a hundred times more than if it were new. I do not hold with vanity or show. That is how I am. One thing, perhaps, might be a little better – my face. It always seems to be daubed with Spanish snuff. An abominable habit of mine, Catt – an abominable habit. Now, sir, you must

confess I have something of a swinish air – confess now!'

Thus the Emperor to his lackey, which the latter passes on for posterity.

There was a tremendous ovation when Frederick entered Breslau. Crowds of madly cheering citizens lined the narrow, cobbled streets. Prints hung in every window depicting Frederick at Rossbach with clouds of smoke – or glory – about his head, a dead horse underfoot, a broken cannon, lilliputian Austrians and Prussians stabbing each other in the background, and printed beneath a verse of the battle hymn :—

*'Look down, O God! Regard my cry!  
On Thee my hopes depend.  
I'm close beset without ally;  
Be Thou my shield and friend!'*

From doorways women waved their kerchiefs. Virgins leaned precariously from attic windows. Men shouted until their voices cracked. But the little old man in the dirty, patched blue coat, the moulting plume, showed no emotion, to the vast wonderment of Professor Garve, of the University, whom Frederick had sought out as a kindred philosopher.

For at Sans Souci, Mene was sick, perhaps dying. And it was the image of Mene dying, alone, in that great palace, which haunted him. Biche had died before her. There had been others. Ten doctors had argued and quarrelled over Biche's body. She had had no chance of recovery. She had gone with the rest; a little green mound on the sixth garden terrace, a little marble tablet. No quack doctors should touch Mene. Milk and delicate meat, in

## Death Comes for the Flute Player

conjunction with the earnest prayers of a philosopher would make her well, if she was to be well again.

He could see her lying upon the blue satin *canapé* in his room, where the damask chair covers had been gnawed to shreds by her fine white teeth, and where the carpet had been stained and fouled by her food.

He had left orders for a *Stafette* to be sent daily with news of her condition as long as he remained in Silesia.

The crowds howled and cheered themselves hoarse. His Highness and La Fayette smiled and bowed; an extraordinary display of feeling, they thought. How these Prussians must love their King! Frederick might have been alone in the midst of a vast desert, for all the notice he paid to the yelling multitude. 'Glory is vain,' he thought. 'Did men ever merit praise? They were praised merely because they made such a clamour. Praise from the *canaille*!'

'Surely, Your Majesty,' remonstrated Garve, knowing that Frederick always allowed a man of learning a certain intimacy. 'Surely, sire, you do not regard your loyal citizens of Breslau, the masses who gave you such a sincere welcome, as *canaille*?'

'Why not, why not?' countered Frederick testily. 'Stick an old monkey on a horse and let him ride through your streets – crowds will flock round him in the same fashion.'

The great review of troops was held on the plain to the south of the city. Frederick watched the manœuvres from his horse. His generals were quick to realize that the old war-bird

had lost none of his cunning. And when one of the wretched 'shoemakers' made a palpable blunder, he soon discovered that Old Fritz had forgotten none of his curses. Frederick might have enjoyed himself drilling his miserable officers if Mene's condition had shown some improvement. But every despatch had been the same; no marked change for good or ill.

After four tiring days in clouds of dust cast up by wheeling squadrons, rain came. It rained for six hours without intermission. The heavy grey downpour obscured the evolutions, except from the eyes of the little old man on the black horse. The dry plain became a sea of mud, churned up by hooves and wheels. Horses steamed and splashed almost belly deep in the mire. Cannon stuck and overturned. Uniforms were bespattered and defiled. The gay plumes sank bedraggled on to the hunched shoulders of their wearers. The men blundered and staggered through the mud. Frederick directed operations from the back of his great black mare, crouched there in the hissing rain, his huge bony head twisted a little to the right, a grim smile on his lips. He watched every evolution, using his biting tongue on his drenched officers. The generals cursed and raved, but what could they do when Old Fritz refused to leave the field, but sat there, without his cloak, forcing them to conduct their movements as if it were a real battlefield? Soaked to the skin, shaking with cold, his hands blue and numb, the old man stayed until the very end, sneering and cursing the 'shoemakers' he was turning into real soldiers.

That evening at table, where he

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insisted on acting the host, the old man was in a high fever. But the next day he completed the manœuvres and straightway began the homeward journey. Bad news had come from Sans Souci. Mene was dying. Mene was dying, and he was not with her.

When he reached Sans Souci he found that Mene was dead. She had been buried. He was too late. The philosopher gave an extraordinary order. An order which, even in those days of unquestioning obedience, had to be repeated twice, angrily, before it was carried out. Was old Fritz going mad? The whisper ran round the palace. Mene was to be disinterred.

Frederick watched the yellow earth being removed, standing on the spot he had reserved for his own grave. He carried the little corpse to his untidy apartment while lackeys watched in wide-eyed amazement. He placed the body on a cushion of blue silk. He turned and locked the door on Catt, who had followed him open-mouthed. The door remained fastened the whole of that day. No one dared interrupt for strange sounds could be heard through the closed door. The sound of an old man sobbing. The sound of an old man's voice praying, though of the scene within the room and of the names of the gods to whom he prayed we can only conjecture.

This old man possessed one of the clearest and finest intellects of his age – of any age. Years before he had written a treatise against Machiavelli. He and Voltaire had corresponded in verse, lauding each other to the skies. He was sobbing himself into hysteria over a dead dog, a little Italian greyhound, whose body was stiff and cold,

and whose skin was defiled with the yellow earth of her tomb.

In all his long life Frederick had but three loves. His sister Wilhelmine, to whose memory he had erected a Temple of Friendship in the park at Sans Souci, the very stones of which had been cemented with his tears. Then there was his youthful companion Katte, who had been executed before his eyes by his father's orders. And lastly were the little Italian greyhounds, now, alas, a row of green mounds on the garden terrace. And he loved these best. There was no woman. Frederick had never loved a woman. 'After all,' he used to say, 'a Marquise de la Pompadour would cost me a good deal more and would neither be so fond nor so faithful as my dogs.'

Mene was stiff and cold. Her fine coat was stained with soil. Her jaws were tightly clenched and snarling. Already there hovered over her corpse the sick-sweet stench of decay. He would never hear her voice again. He would never feel her delicate fore-paws on his knees when he sat at table.

A month later Frederick had his first skirmish with death. On September 18th he had an apoplectic seizure, the dreaded family curse of the Hohenzollerns. He knew that this was the preliminary skirmish of the battle, which in the end he was bound to lose. But he had no intention of succumbing at the initial attack.

He had made certain provisions against his defeat. The Philosopher is never caught unready, even by so unwelcome a guest as Death.

'I have lived as a Philosopher,' he

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wrote, 'and I wish to be buried as becomes a Philosopher, without pomp or ceremony. Should I die in Berlin or Potsdam, I do not wish to be exposed to the idle curiosity of my people. I wish to be buried at midnight of the third day after my death. I wish to be carried to Sans Souci by the light of a lantern, no one following my corpse but the men who carry my coffin and to be quietly buried in the Garden of Sans Souci.'

The old warrior was forced into his bed, his little soldier's cot. But his doctors found him an obstinate patient. He regarded all doctors as quacks and murderers. His first words to the great Zimmermann were: 'How many churchyards have you filled, Herr Doktor?' He refused their medicines, cut short their long-involved remonstrances with sneers and gibes. Only by frightening him could they get him to obey their lightest recommendations.

Frederick had made up his mind that he was suffering from asthma and gout. The asthma did not matter very much, it merely shortened his breath a little and made him cough. But the gout was making his legs useless. The right foot was swelling, and it hurt abominably. It was gout. He spent most of his time in trying to make his doctors believe in his gout. But they would not be convinced, neither would they suggest any other possibility, and this maddened the irascible old man. Nevertheless the King had his way. All his subjects knew that Old Fritz was suffering from gout.

But in March, 1785, the gout suddenly grew worse. Both feet and legs became swollen. His arms in-

creased in size. His hands became useless. The Philosopher had to submit to the indignity of having his food cut up and placed in his mouth by a servant. This was gall, the like of which he had never imagined. It was no longer a skirmish; the battle was joined.

'I consider I have served my term,' he wrote with difficulty when strength had partially returned to his hands. 'My time is passed. I shall die soon.' But this feeling of despair was only momentary.

As the spring advanced he became worse. Erysipelas broke out. He was in a constant fever. It was then that the doubts he had managed to still before refused to be quieted. Could it be only gout, his enormous legs and fearful abdominal pain? Was it merely gout?

His Majesty's doctors, Selle, Cothenius, Frese and Theden looked very wise, but said little, nothing definite. The King must persevere with their medicines. But Frederick would have nothing to do with their filthy concoctions. When the diabolical quartette appeared at his bedside, with long solemn faces he howled curses, calling them ghouls, imbeciles, murderers, until his voice cracked or until he was silenced by a fit of coughing. And in spite of their earnest entreaties he refused to curb his appetite. His palate had been hopelessly ruined in the hardships and rigours of his innumerable campaigns. Now he could only enjoy foods cooked in excessively hot spices. After practically every meal his frail body was torn apart by deathly sickness. Then the doctors had to run to give him ease. When

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they had gone their draughts were thrown away.

Doctor Selle at length lost his temper. 'Your Majesty imagines he is suffering from gout,' he began silkily. 'Has it ever occurred to you, sire, that your disease may not be gout at all? These swellings and pains are not caused by gout. Hasn't Your Majesty ever thought that it might perhaps be something else - dropsy?'

Dropsy! Frederick was appalled. His father had suffered the agonies of dropsy for five years. Five years of torture. Pah! they were trying to frighten him. Selle was a fool, a charlatan, a regicide. It couldn't be dropsy. It was not dropsy.

Selle and his infamous colleagues were driven from Potsdam with a cloud of curses. In a few days all his people knew that the King was stricken with dropsy. Mirabeau, the revolutionary living in Berlin at the time, wrote that it was Frese who inadvertently made the knowledge public.

The dust of their departure had hardly settled in the long avenue before Frederick was half mad with fear. Yet he would not recall them. He was at grips with the Enemy.

Death! He, the Philosopher of Sans Souci, was dying. He had seen death in many forms. He had shed tears over the hideous obscenity of the battlefield. As a young man he had seen Katte's severed head leap from his shoulders. He had often discoursed with Voltaire on the nature of Death in the abstract. Voltaire had discovered death seven years before. Now it was to be a reality, growing more menacing each day, each moment, like a monstrous winged

shadow spreading across the sky. He had plenty of time for thought. He remembered the battlefield at Leuthen. A headless grenadier propped against a broken wheel. Dead horses. A wounded mare screaming. Dead men with their faces turned skyward, their bodies naked and greenish under the empty stars. A dead camp-follower, naked also, her breasts torn off. He remembered the song of the victorious Prussians on that field of gashed and plundered corpses. '*Nun danket alle Gott!*' God! Wilhelmine had died, Biche, Mene, and soon - Frederick. Soon he was to be a name, a sound on men's lips, a sound synonymous with ghoul, murderer, mad-philosopher.

Years before he had contemplated suicide. Now that remembrance came to him. He recollected, with a twisted smile of self-mockery, how he had written to his sister: 'If the house in which I live is full of smoke, haven't I the right to move out of it? Why shouldn't my soul move out of my body when the latter is smoky? I have been brought into the world without being asked for my permission, therefore no one has a right to hinder my departure from the world when it no longer pleases me.' He had written to Voltaire on the subject, quoting, to enforce his argument for self-murder the manner of the death of Socrates, of Seneca and of Petronius Arbiter. Constantly Frederick had carried on his person a small phial of poison. He even went so far as to toy with the idea of a suicide pact with Wilhelmine. It was Voltaire who finally dissuaded him. Now he was nearing a most unphilosophical and a most unlovely death. But dropsy; it could not be dropsy!

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In April, thinking the end very near, he was carried to Sans Souci. Sans Souci in the midst of its great park of noble beeches, its sacred Temple of Friendship housing the ghost of Wilhelmine, its busts of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus – divine philosopher, its garden terrace where his dogs lay buried, each with a commemorative marble tablet. Johann Sebastian Bach, cantor of the Thomas Kirche of Leipzig had made the lofty rooms echo and pulsate with his music. Sans Souci.

Twelve months went by in a haze of dreams and memories, scenes relived, battles refought. Slowly and steadily Frederick became more and more helpless. The death grapple tightened. He went through his work as usual, beginning the day at four when Von Rohdich came for the parole. No foreign power guessed that Frederick the Great was at bay. Sans Souci was a hive of activity.

Then Frederick remembered Dr. Zimmermann, physician to His English Majesty George III. On June 8th, 1786, the King wrote:—

‘FREDERICK to GEORG RITTER VON ZIMMERMANN, – For eight months I have been badly attacked with asthma. My own doctors are fools. They give me their most powerful drugs, but instead of bringing relief they have actually made my illness worse. The reputation of your skill is known throughout Northern Europe. I should feel happy indeed if you could come here for fifteen days so that I could consult you.’

Frederick did not mention dropsy.

Zimmermann arrived at Sans Souci on the twenty-fourth. He found the old King sprawled in a huge armchair with his back to the wall. His enormously swollen legs rested on a tabouret. He still wore his old blue coat. His linen was ragged and filthy. His face had lengthened and twisted farther to the right.

‘You find me very ill, Herr Doktor,’ croaked Frederick.

‘But I see no diminution of the fire and strength in Your Majesty’s eye,’ was the astute rejoinder.

‘Nevertheless I am very ill. I have changed very much.’

‘Europe does not know that Your Majesty is very ill.’

‘My affairs are conducted in their usual way,’ said Frederick proudly.

‘You prolong your life by rising at four o’clock each morning.’

‘I never rise Herr Doktor, for I never go to bed. My nights are spent in this armchair.’

When Zimmermann examined his patient he found his legs swollen beyond belief, with water to the loins. His body was terribly emaciated. There were traces of water in the chest.

‘Is it possible to cure me?’ gasped the old man.

‘To relieve you, sire, I hope.’

‘My legs may be a little swollen, but I am not dropsical. It is asthma. I do not have dropsy,’ he pleaded.

But Zimmermann was not to be drawn.

‘What you have not now you may have later. We must do everything to ward off the danger of dropsy.’

‘I am not afraid of danger. Danger never frightened me. But I do not



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wish to suffer. Pain horrifies me. I must have some relief, immediately.'

'This is something I wish Your Majesty with all my heart. But my medicines may not give you the relief you crave.'

'Then let matters go as they please. I do not fear death. I was never afraid of death – but I dread pain; I fear pain.'

Zimmermann knew that there could be no question of a cure, and the very remotest possibility of any temporary relief. For a time Frederick dutifully obeyed his new physician. Then his obstinacy broke out again, and he indulged his enormous appetite with highly indigestible dishes. This brought on a severe sickness, and a penitent Frederick promised to curb his dietary aberrations. But the same evening he consumed a meal of terrifying proportions. To spur his jaded palate he commenced with a table-spoonful of nutmeg and another of stuffed ginger, followed by a highly spiced soup. Then came a gargantuan joint of beef cooked in the Russian manner, and a dish of Prussian peas, probably the most indigestible of all vegetables – washed down with a pint of raw brandy. There were half a dozen varieties of Italian cheeses which had been soaked in garlic juice and baked in butter, swimming in a concoction of the hottest Indian spices.

Frederick overate and fell asleep at the table among the ruins of his feast. His guests were afraid to move lest they should disturb the snoring philosopher. Suddenly he stirred and woke up feeling deathly sick. Zimmermann was summoned. He found his

patient in a state of complete collapse, 'an old carcase, fit for the dunghill.'

Frederick swallowed oil of dandelion, though he detested the vile drug. Next day he felt relieved, so much so that he was hoisted on the back of his great horse Condé. For an hour he rode slowly round the park between the beeches. But he was carried home worse than ever.

Again Zimmermann remonstrated with his unruly patient. Unless he pulled himself together and took more care of himself he would die. How could he expect his worn-out physique to withstand the strain of the violent sickness which always followed his ridiculous meals.

Frederick snorted and cursed. Dying! He would show the damned quacks that there was nothing wrong with his insides. He would show Doctor grave-filler Zimmermann what he thought of his nauseous potions and his confounded advice. He would eat exactly what he pleased. Pah, dying!

Forthwith the philosopher proceeded to gorge a tremendous meal of a countless array of dishes seasoned with ginger, garlic and asafoetida.

Zimmermann left on July 12th, and by that date the dropsy had invaded the belly and chest. Now that there could be no question of the nature of his disease, Frederick recalled Selle, who operated immediately, making an incision in the right thigh, without, however, giving the King much relief.

The King was dying.

Mirabeau records in his diary on August 2nd: 'The King is exceedingly chilly, and is continually enveloped in

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furs and feather beds. He has not entered his bed these six weeks, but is moved from one armchair to another, where he rests tolerably well, lying upon his right side.'

On August 10th the philosopher saw the face of his adversary, and knew that his defeat was not far off.

That day he wrote his farewell to his sister Charlotte.

'The old must give place to the young,' he sang, 'so that each generation may find room clear for it; and Life, if we examine strictly what its course is, consists in seeing one's fellow creatures die and be born.'

On August 15th Frederick began his day at five o'clock in the morning. He wore his threadbare blue coat and his crushed hat with its moulting feather. His legs were propped in front of him on a stool. His face had shrunk; the skin was the colour of grimy parchment. His eyes were bright and darting, like the eyes of a fierce, old, battle-scarred falcon. . . .

Generals, ministers, envoys and secretaries throng about the little twisted figure. His hands tremble like leaves as he holds the dispatches. It is almost impossible for him to think clearly enough to dictate orders to his two secretaries. When they place documents before him for his signature he cannot control the pen. They have to guide his fingers over the paper. Among other things he arranges a grand review of troops to take place at Potsdam. He intends to be present in person, he informs them. They stand, grave and silent. None will meet his eye. Frederick repeats his intention angrily, and glares round at the ring of

solemn averted faces. As he glares the faces swim together and vanish into blackness. His head falls back in a swoon.

Next morning when Von Rohdich presents himself for the parole, he finds the King surrounded by half a dozen frightened lackeys. Frederick has collapsed in his chair. His head is twisted sideways on his shoulder. His face is grey, twitching with pain. The livid lips are open, flecked with saliva, writhing as he gasps for breath. The eyes roll with an expression it is impossible to fathom. A few indescribable sounds bubble from the throat when the old man tries to speak.

Von Rohdich is overcome. He kisses the cold, motionless hand. A tear splashes on the withered skin.

The Councillors arrive. But the King remains speechless. Only by the terrible intensity of those eloquent eyes can it be guessed what efforts the dying man is making to regain his voice.

Darkness is coming upon him. The darkness of Eternity. It will engulf him as it engulfed Katte. What was the Philosopher thinking? Futility? Was he thinking of Mene, of Wilhelmine, of Voltaire and the Beaux Esprits, or of the half million he had driven to death in the Seven Years' War?

The darkness descends. But a few more hours the feeble struggle goes on. The will is indomitable.

Suddenly the eyes open. The intense fixity has gone. They are calm.

There is a noise in his ears, music. The sound of the flute, but played by no mortal musician:—

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And as Wilhelmine's hand touches his wrist he whispers: 'The mountain is past.'

### OVERHEARD

I AM quite sure that no dangers are to be feared by England from the disannexing and independence of Ireland at all comparable with the evils which have been, and yet will be, caused to England by the Union. We have never received one particle of advantage from our association with Ireland, whilst we have in many most vital particulars violated the principles of the British constitution solely for the purpose of conciliating the Irish agitators, and of endeavouring – a vain endeavour – to find room for them under the same government. Mr. Pitt has received great credit for effecting the Union; but I believe it will sooner or later be discovered that the manner in which, and the terms upon which he effected it, made it the most fatal blow that was ever levelled against the peace and prosperity of England.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1831.

IN the present age it is next to impossible to predict from specimens, however favourable, that a young man will turn out a great poet, or rather a poet at all. Poetic taste, dexterity in composition, and ingenious imitation, often produce poems that are very promising in appearance. But genius, or the power of doing something new, is another thing.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

REALLY, the metre of some of the modern poems I have read bears about the same relation to metre properly understood that dumb-bells do to music; both are for exercise, and pretty severe too, I think.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

IN politics, what begins in fear usually ends in folly.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

# Mud

by Richard Church

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TWENTY years ago  
My generation learned  
To be afraid of mud.  
We watched its vileness grow,  
Deeper and deeper churned  
From earth, spirit, and blood.

From earth, sweet-smelling enough  
As moorland, field, and coast;  
Firm beneath the corn,  
Noble to the plough;  
Purified by frost  
Every winter morn.

From blood, the invisible river  
Pulsing from the hearts  
Of patient man and beast.  
The healer and life-giver;  
The union of parts;  
The meaning of the feast.

From spirit, which is man  
In triumphant mood,  
Conqueror of fears,  
Alchemist of pain  
Changing bad to good;  
Master of the Spheres.

Earth, the king of space,  
Blood, the king of time,  
Spirit, their lord and god,  
All tumbled from their place,  
All trodden into slime,  
All mingled into mud.

# A Defence of Elia

## by Elia

CHARLES LAMB DIED 27 DECEMBER 1834

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**T**HIS keeping of centenaries is always a chancy business. If one consider, as one well may, that those who co-operate in that piety are themselves enthusiasts how can one expect to escape the charge of insufficiency? Every man, thinking on his favourite toast, would sooner drain his own goblet than regard another quenching his eager thirst; and each man can pour out his own aqueous dilution, if he dare, to mingle with the spirit of Charles Lamb. There are others whom any centenary sends hastily to the black-wash bucket. 'What! a hundred years dead, and still talked about! Still, plague take him, read to our detriment, still respected, still loved! Let me at him, for I warrant I can find something damnably unmodish in the fellow. He probably wore his buttons on the wrong side of his coat, and had an execrable taste in neck-wear.' Were it not for those, indeed, who read but to find fault and visit shrines only for a convenience, we might perhaps best celebrate centenaries in silence, or in a convivial meeting of agreement on the merits of genius. Yet this would be a poor tribute to Charles Lamb. No one would better understand the deni-

grators of Elia than himself: a man of universal acceptance is a man of poor character, and an author without enemies is an author without savour. The fact that most of the unfavourable judgements on his work and character, called forth by his centenary, arise from a profound ignorance of what he tried to do and a profounder misunderstanding of what he was, would not have disturbed Lamb in the least. He was used to fools in his lifetime; and he could himself, when he wished, analyse his faults and his perversities far more shrewdly than the modern critic. That his style was artificial he knew well enough; but he had something which he could turn into artifice. That his work was an escape he would admit: why not? He did not live in a dry vacuity; but had something to escape from, and, as we know, a rare country into which he could take himself and us.

As I thought of how great a burden he had the genius to shift from his shoulders for a while, how rich and dark an experience he had to transmute into golden fancy and fantasy, what a world of hard fact he used for his imaginative flights, I thought I would

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revisit the scenes of Lamb's life with which, when I was a boy, I was most familiar. I was born within a mile of Colebrooke Cottage, and have often gazed through the railings to look at the waters which so startlingly closed over the head of George Dyer, and have seen in fancy the sexagenarian poet, rescued from the incontinent stream and sitting by the fire, his colossal legs sparsely covered by a pair of Lamb's exiguous knee-breeches. For love of Lamb, I revered that inn, 'The Angel,' now so deplorably pushed out of the heavenly places into a den of Lyons; and I wandered round the then degenerate theatre of Sadler's Wells, and paced the pavement of Camden Passage where Lamb may have seen the wild figure of Alexander Cruden, the Great Corrector. Lamb's Islington is no more. Not only has there been the zodiacal decline of its ancient hostelry—Cruden I fear is forgotten in Camden Passage; Sadler's Wells theatre is restored nobly to the drama; but has scarcely yet the uproarious character that belongs only, among London theatres, to the Old Vic. Worse than this, those who live in Islington now talk glibly of themselves as Londoners; the green places are enclosed and forget the country, and that great water which Sir Hugh Myddleton gave to his city—the water which Lamb looked on at Islington, at Blakeswell and Widford, at Enfield, and at Edmonton, that noble stream, the New River, runs for nearly all its course ignominiously in pipes.

There is, however, a short stretch of the river in Canonbury, where, sluggish and disheartened, the water still remembers its springs, and invites

the country. To that stretch, looking for Elia, I betook me. What happened, then, may if you like be explained according to Mr. J. W. Dunne's theory of time—but it will not be so explained by me (not through lack of will, let me hasten to add, but through lack of understanding). For those who would prefer a more rationalistic theory it would be only fair to mention that when I paid this visit of tribute and expectation to the New River as it washes the Douglas Road at Canonbury, I was still under the subjection of the Russian influenza—a malady which tends, I have been told, to exercise a heightening effect on the bodily temperature and the mental condition of the patient. Well, whether in the fever or out of the fever I know not, I made my journey to that sacred stream. Opposite the garden of a house I stopped, ambitious of the railings. There was the garden in which, against his advice, I had sometimes as a child read in the *Essays of Elia*. There was the conservatory in which grew a vine that boasted some nepotic relation to the Great Vine at Hampton Court, and yielded grapes not inferior to those which burden that royal plant. There were the banks where once, an eager and esurient youngster, I lay upon my belly and endeavoured to acquire the retiring minnow, the darting stickle-back, or the mud-protected crayfish. There was my grandfather's country home from which, in the days scarcely sullied by income-tax and through roads innocent of the fragrances of the internal-combustion engine, he would drive his dog-cart or ride his nag to conduct the affairs of the Inland Revenue at Somerset House by the

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Thames. The temptation was too great for me. Age and Sir Robert Peel's agents forgotten, I was up and over the railings to be closer to those dear dirty waters which are still destined to be changed, for those rash enough to take such liquid internally, into the clear potable that sparkles in our carafes. I gazed, englamoured, forgetting all about Elia and the past. And the past and Elia were present with me.

The moment I had scaled those railings – whether by squeezing through or leaping over I cannot truthfully say – I must have been invested with the privilege of invisibility. On the further side of the road I could hear the tramp and see the figures of those who returned from stool and desk to their misconceived flatlets or first-floors furnished. The postman paced busily by, with one knock serving a round half-dozen of correspondents; and from a few hardily open windows pithed voices in the patois of Portland Place gave warning of what the noonday news-sheet had already informed those Londoners who still retain the power and the habit of reading. For them I was not. Occasionally a more alert passer-by, hearing the splash in the water as I idly shuffled a clod into the river, turned round and muttered 'Frog', and hurried on: but I was unseen and unmolested, as I stood there, on the edge of the water from Amwell spring, and meditated on Elia and his essays.

I was not surprised at this immunity. Was it not in this very road of Douglas that, some thirty-nine years ago, I had stood in sunshine on this same spot, talking of days gone by to

one of the guardians of the river, and we, warm and comfortable in that sunshine, had watched thick rain and harsh hailstones pelt on the pavement not two yards distant? There was always something magical about the road. Dusk began to fall. While there was still light in the western sky, and while the water still held something of the day, I heard a stammering voice just behind me. There was a small dark figure, unspeakably thin, clad in old-fashioned, rusty clothes, buckle shoes, no hat, a face imperfectly shaven, a big nose in braggart charge of a shy, sensitive mouth, eyes that looked through what they looked at, and which smiled while they scanned me, and penetrated. Luck, or fortunate training, elicited the right comment. 'Mr. Lamb,' I exclaimed. He made a bow, and took out his snuff-box, gravely, proffering a pinch. 'Prince's Own,' I murmured shyly as, taking his 'Irish blackguard', I produced my own box. 'Tut, boy', he answered, 'an overbearing mixture scarce tolerable save to the nostrils of His obesity.' 'Yet Mr. Fox,' I was bold enough to murmur. 'Y're right, boy – I'll take a pinch in honour of Fox and the Revolution.' So, trembling at the honour vouchsafed to me, I stood and snuffed with Charles Lamb.

We were silent for some minutes, he looking gravely and despondently at the water, I looking reverently at him. Then, with a twinkle, he said, 'Even this paltry measure of water reminds me that I have not drunk to-day. There should be a tavern near here – "The Marquess of Granby" – let us go there, and you shall tell me who you are that remember this melancholy rivulet,

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and why you pay it, as I see you do, the honour of so intense a regard.'

Here was a quandary. How could I explain to Mr. Lamb that we now lived under a pestilent paternalism which decreed that, during certain hours of the day, a man might not drink excepting tea, coffee, or minerals? How indeed was it possible to expound the character of the strange liquors disguised under that last vocable? He saw my hesitation, and his very frown had a stammer in it.

'No s-s-s-nuff-taker, surely, can be addicted to that vile heresy which propounds that the only drink is this f-f-f-luid? If so . . . ?' and his hand on my shoulder threatened an immersion as undesired as it would have been undeserved.

'God forbid!' said I. 'I was weaned long years ago and only look on milk when it is puncht and on water when it is heavily corrected. But our London taverns will not open their doors for another hour or so!'

'And who the d-d-d-evil ever shut them?' asked Mr. Lamb.

To which I, 'I beg you, Mr. Lamb, do not let me waste these precious moments in denunciatory exposition of the inept extravagancies of our legislators. If you will so far honour me as to come to my chambers in Lincoln's Inn, we may sit by a good fire of coals, and I will brew what you will.'

His eye clouded and a smile of melancholy recollection was on his lips when I said 'Lincoln's Inn'. 'Lincoln's Inn,' he murmured, 'you have chambers in Lincoln's Inn? I could wish,' with a sigh, 'it was the Inner Temple; but there, that will mean nothing to you, boy!'

'Nothing to me,' I burst out, emboldened by this incredible modesty; 'nothing to me! Why, sir, for your sake the Temple has been hallowed to thousands, more hallowed than ever it was, since the bad Pope in his greed slandered and destroyed that noble and gallant order The Templars. The Temple! Your Temple?' And I went on, 'Do you remember how you wrote:

"I was born, and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple. Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said, for in those young years what was the king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places? — these are of my oldest recollections. I repeat, to this day, no verses to myself more frequently or with kindlier emotion, than those of Spenser where he speaks of this spot.

'There when they came, whereas  
those bricky towers,  
The which on Themmes brode aged  
back doth ride,  
There whylome wont the Templar  
Knights to bide  
Till they decayd through pride.'"

'Indeed it is the most elegant spot in the metropolis. What a transition for a countryman visiting London for the first time — the passing from the crowded Strand or Fleet Street by unexpected avenues, into its magnificent, ample squares, its classic, green recesses! What a cheerful, liberal look hath that portion of it, which, from three sides, overlooks the greater gardens: that goodly pile:

"Of buildings strong, albeit of Paper  
hight,"



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confronting, with massy contrast, the lighter, older, more fantastically shrouded one, named of Harcourt, with the cheerful Crown Office Row (place of my kindly engendure) right opposite the stately stream, which washes the garden foot with her yet scarcely trade polluted waters, and seems but just weaned from her Twickenham Naiades! A man would give something to have been born in such places.'

As I finished, a thought exanimate, I looked at my companion. There were tears in his eyes. He had seized me by the arm when I came to Spenser's lines, and stood there with a ghost of a blush on that fallow cheek.

'B-b-b-boy,' he stammered, 'you have read the essays of Elia? Even in this l-l-l-' (I began to wonder how the word would end, could lousy have reached the country of the Shades?) 'In this lost London there are still those, who, as I loved to do, batten on old bookstalls, and take home forgotten or half-forgotten tomes, and find in them what their h-h-h-hearts have sung in the silence? There are?'

'But, Mr. Lamb,' I said, 'you are not forgotten. Thousands read you. Your books are the subject of instruction in our schools.' (Lamb seemed to wince slightly at this.) 'We are now keeping your centenary. As I say, for your sake and for Mr. William Blake's, the Temple is again holy ground.'

Mr. Lamb staggered and looked at me long and incredulously. 'B-b-b-Blake too! That superb, divine madman! Boy, I must hear more; and I must d-d-d-drink. Can we find a hackney carriage?'

During our brief journey to Lincoln's Inn - Mr. Lamb complained that the horseless vehicle took an intolerable time longer than would a decent nag - I tried to tell him something about his reputation with us. He listened, but was not convinced. He reminded me that the first edition of the *Essays of Elia* did not sell out in the twelve years between its publication in 1823 and his death: and he found it difficult to credit its subsequent popularity. He inquired anxiously about Blake, and seemed more gratified at the poet's increase in fame than in his own. 'I was q-q-q-quiet,' he kept muttering. 'Blake was a great genius when he wasn't a g-g-g-goose!'

In my room, seized by I know not what of caprice, I ventured to ask if I could demonstrate to him what the Americans had made of his favourite tippie gin, and I shook him a dry Martini. He swallowed it: and another and a third. Then spoke.

'There is a certain frivolous volatility about those toothfuls. I don't b-b-b-believe there is a hiccup in a ha'porth. Shall we p-p-p-put the kettle on?'

I hadn't the courage nor the tactlessness - did not Lamb once, when he met a friend who looked down in the mouth, offer him a hundred pounds? - to enlighten him about the current price of gin. I fetched the kettle, and the Demarara and listened.

There were altitudes in his conversation, and profundities and flights of fancy and imaginative adventures; there were puns and pathos, there was scholarship and sly wisdom, glimpses into a past fascinated by that Caroline tongue, inquiries about what to him

## A Defence of Elia

was future, and to me was past and present. I found it hard to satisfy him: he was insatiable of information and made me pull down volume after volume consecrated either to his works, his times, or his memory. He was most pleased, I think, with Edmund Blunden's two books, with E. V. Lucas's handsome edition of the Works and by the Gregynog Press fine reprint of *Elia*. This last reduced him to an amazement of admiration. He had acquired a little more respect for the externals of a book than he had had in his earthly life, and he was lenient to my own careful bibliomania. Still I was a trifle uneasy as he handled that splendid edition, until I caught myself thinking how ludicrous it was that I should try and protect Elia from Charles Lamb, and after that, betrayed no anxiety as his snuff-taking fingers turned over the lovely pages. He would not be content until he had extracted from me the admission that there were certain wry-mouthed critics who were determined to black-wash his reputation – people who could not bear his intimacy with Latin, who disdained his cheerfulness and, in effect, echoed the bilious abuse of Mr. Thomas Carlyle. He remembered Carlyle – with amusement and a little anger because he had thought him unmannerly to Bridget.

'He was an odd, awkward sort of Scotch person,' he said, 'and terribly afraid of enjoyment. I believed he had abandoned his religion, with the untoward consequence that he kept the Scotch Sabbath all the week, no longer attaching any sanctity to the one day. I'm afraid he saw that I regarded his wife – an intelligent, quick-spoken

woman – as a provincial: it would not have mattered had she not been so pertly unmetropolitan.'

He turned over the pages of a modern essay on Charles Lamb.

'Yes,' he murmured, 'the Ecclefechan child has his descendants: here's the same spirit. This fellow cannot bear that reading should give a man any pleasure, or that it should be a delight or an entertainment. He dislikes laughter, and would be superior with Addison – perhaps it is just as well, for when the jackass laughs it is time to escape from the resulting tumult.'

Mr. Lamb listened as I tried to tell him about some of our modern developments in literature; he was always ready with an apposite comparison, and could not be disconcerted even by an inspection of Mr. Joyce's *Work in Progress*. Indeed in Mr. Joyce's love of rhythm, and passion for strange words, he declared that he found an enthusiasm akin to his own.

Suddenly he asked me to leave him – 'There are faces I would recall, and I shall do it more easily if you would leave me alone, here by the fire, with my snuff-box and my glass. And have you got ink and paper?' I gave him what he asked, and went upstairs, where I fell asleep. I was aroused some hours later by the noise of the sporting of my oak. I hurried down. The lights were still on. The chair and table by the fire. A pile of books scattered on the floor and the sofa. And on the table some sheets of paper written in his clear, neat handwriting.

### *In Defence of Elia*

That the fellow should be needing a defence more than a hundred years

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after I had introduced him to the readers of the *London Magazine* is something which was quite beyond my conception. His faults, such as they are, would, I had imagined, have been as forgotten as his name; and I did not suppose but that I could leave him to the dark protection of oblivion. I hope that his original, busy now, I trust, with the book-keeping of the blessed, may have some satisfaction in this vicarious immortality. I borrowed his name, idly, as I might have borrowed his pen or his pouncet-box, as we sat near one another in those important halls which I reached so late, and from which I went so early. What I had written as Charles Lamb had pleased a few friends and made a few friends, but had been not much liked by the general; so I decided on a false name to grace my measure. To speak truth, I was never besotted in my attachment to the name of Lamb, though, in defence of it, I once scandalized some by translating it into the celestial places; I was never eager for mutton, even in its infancy, and I wonder some of your ingenious modern critics have not discovered in my play *Mr. H*— a hidden declaration, not only of my love for sucking-pig, but a suppressed wish for a new name, scarcely disguised in my preference for that noble animal and its crackling over any lamb, however delicate its fleece and tender its meat. Still, the name Bacon was already doubly occupied; Pigg and Hogg have no euphony for an essayist, and Boar has an unfortunate sound for any who aims to please by his writing. Elia had no claims made on it, except by my old colleague, and was free from associations either thrasonical or unfortunate.

It should be pronounced Ellia, though my old friend Howitt, in a fit of Cockney determination, for which I will not blame him, rhymes it to 'desire': and I understand that to-day those who used the word prefer to call it *Ēlia*, and neither I nor the old owner would object. Or perhaps—for I may as well hang for a pestilent punster—you might try Elia, which will give you in the possessive Elia's—and Elias was a prophet. I vow there is something prophetic in my essays: by which I do not mean in the vulgar sense; they predict nothing, but they are the work of a man who had a vision, and was determined to share it, rather than of a man who had a theory and would not cease from proclaiming it. I notice that one of my pretty modern critics—of which there must, I swear, be more than I have been told of—complains that 'I breathe in his ear,' that 'I am remote from centrality,' that 'I never require the reader to reorientate himself' and that I invented 'the fake personality'. From the tone of the essay in which I discovered these phrases I conceive that the author intended them all to be expressions of disapprobation. He would have done better to familiarize himself with the times in which I wrote, or even to have read some of the essays of Elia, instead of contenting himself—for I will gladly make this excuse for his ignorance—with what he has read about me.

If I exacerbate him by breathing in his ear, it can only be because he is hard of hearing. To say that I am 'remote from centrality' is a pretty obvious criticism of an author who professes to be eccentric. It would have been more profitable had this

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critic discussed in what centrality consists, and whether there be any virtue in it or in eccentricity. The centre of what? His world, or mine, or that inferno's where Judas and his companions are disconsolately centred in Hell's jaws? I warrant that some who made no boast of being more than circumferential may be nearer the heart of things than the man whose brag it is he is in the middle. To boast of being central is like boasting of being normal – a sign of an uneasy superiority. Nor can I see how it can be safely asserted that an author never requires 'the reader to re-orientate himself'. It would seem to depend on where the reader's east happens to be. If my critic merely means that no one has changed his opinions because of me, he lies; if he means that no man has changed his self after reading in *Elia*, he is a far wiser man than I could guess from the rest of his writing. To have put back into favour Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Fuller, Marvell, Cowley, and John Donne may seem a light exercise to the young students of Cambridge; but it was not accomplished without a great deal of reasonably hard work. Then he will have it that I invented the fake personality. Who the devil is this chitterling from the Cam to say whether Elia's personality was a fake or no? Can any man who examines himself find only one man in his skin, and that always and altogether integral? Am I not in myself, is not any man who thinks at all, and dreams of what he thinks, more than one? Is it not a testimony of a central citadel, held perhaps difficultly and with danger, that a man admits to a division in himself? Has this child ever

sojourned in Hoxton Madhouse, or taken a loved one again and again to those darkneses where a man learns the virtue and the valour of the mind's unity, because he has gone in the dread of losing it? It was not I who said that no man can save his soul unless he lose it, but no doubt that authority is no longer acknowledged by those who find in the careful and over-conscious Addison a model of sense and maturity.

I find it curious that others who protest – and there is to my mind some justice in their protest though little sense in their arguments – against the exaggerated homage now paid to Elia, should dislike in his essays qualities not dissimilar from those which they admire in their own favourites. I had a habit, innocent and not too serious, of incorporating in my prose snatches of other men's work, echoes from poems I loved; and in rebellion against the dry and dusty pedestrianism of our Humes and our Adam Smiths, of writing in the longer and more ornate rhythms of an earlier prose. It is true I provided no notes for *Elia*, and, save for my Latinisms, kept to the language of my country. To-day I understand one of your most admired poets intersperses his work with quotations from other men's poems; and that another greatly esteemed author does not disdain French, German, Italian, and Chinese in his ambition to decorate his subjects. Shall the Waste Land have privileges denied to the New River? And may not Elia rejoice in his Latin while another's work progresses from Choctaw to the land of Sinim? May not a pun of fancy be worth a Pound in practice? Elia – but why should I spoil fair paper in this unnecessary

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apologia? That his essays are esteemed by so many makes it ungracious in me to argue with those who do not care for him. My enemies can take advantage of my old humour which was always, as they complain, to let a man keep his foibles and his idiosyncrasies rather than that I should be at the pains to alter them. My friend Hazlitt, whom the solemn-minded always and rightly preferred to me, said all there was to say more than a century ago:

‘I will, however, admit that the said Elia is the worst company in the world in bad company, if it be granted me that in good company he is nearly the best that can be. He is one of those of whom it may be said, Tell me your company and I’ll tell you your manners. He is the creature of sympathy, and makes good whatever opinion you seem to entertain of him. He cannot outgo the apprehensions of the circle; and invariably acts up or down to the point of refinement or vulgarity at which they pitch him. He appears to take a pleasure in exaggerating the prejudices of strangers against him; a pride in confirming the prepossessions of friends. In whatever scale of intellect he is placed, he is as lively or as stupid as the rest can be for their lives. If you think him odd and ridiculous, he becomes more and more so every minute, *à la folie*, till he is a wonder gazed at by all – set him against a good wit and a ready apprehension and he brightens more and more. . . .’

And I think it should be remembered to my credit that I myself tried to kill the rogue in 1823: although I

was his friend, and wrote as Phil-Elia, I did not altogether suppress his offensive characteristics:

‘Few understood him; and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure – irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in the ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator, and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit* and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow; till some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps if rightly taken) which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him! but nine times out of ten he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kinder than his utterance, and his happiest impromptus had the appearance of effort. He has been accused of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thought articulation. He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested. . . .’

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That Elia had found and kept so many friends is evidence, I take it, that he did, in your modern jargon, contrive to express himself: that this same self-expression should also have earned the enmity of others seems to be matter neither for surprise nor reprobation. Nothing but universal popularity or the plaudits of the solemn would

ever disconcert him; and Elia——

There the manuscript broke off. I sat, with the paper in my hand, looking at the dying fire: the manuscript, a strong smell of gin and tobacco and, in my ears, the echo of that delectable stammer were all that remained of my unexpected visitor.

### OVERHEARD

—— is one of those men who go far to shake my faith in a future state of existence; I mean, on account of the difficulty of knowing where to place him. I could not bear to roast him; he is not so bad as all that comes to: but then, on the other hand, to have to sit down with such a fellow in the very lowest pot-house of heaven is utterly inconsistent with the belief of that place being a place of happiness for me.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1832.

THE best way to bring a clever young man, who has become sceptical and unsettled, to reason, is to make him *feel* something in any way. Love, if sincere and unworldly, will in nine cases out of ten, bring him to a sense and assurance of something real and actual; and that sense alone will make him *think* to a sound purpose, instead of dreaming that he is thinking. — S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

GOOD and bad men are each less so than they seem.—S. T. COLERIDGE, 1830.

# Oxford

## Life and Letters, 1917-1918

by the Author of *Two Harrow Diaries*\*

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IT was raining hard both at Oxford and in Venice when I first visited these illustrious places. Venice came before Oxford, though my home was three minutes walk from Paddington Station; this now strikes me as a characteristic fact about my environment.

When the rain cleared in Venice – the time was spring – I saw the Grand Canal burst without ado into colour under the Mediterranean sun. I arrived at Oxford after dark in autumn. It was during the war. Though I was only sixteen, and my business was the strictly civilian one of doing a Greek exam., I came, from some patriotic motive (in the Harrow authorities, not in me), dressed in the O.T.C. uniform. After fixing up a room at the 'Mitre' I walked out into Turle Street, turned at random up Brasenose Lane, and soon came to the square in the middle of which the Radcliffe Camera stands.

The rain had stopped. With a drop in the temperature the air had become frosty, the atmosphere clear, and

in a cloudless sky rode the young moon. I halted, facing the Radcliffe and St. Mary's, with Brasenose on my right and the two strangely cat-like towers of All Souls on my left. That square is paved with round pebbles. Their hardness under foot lent body to the exquisite ghostliness of the scene I was contemplating. But if there was a ghost here, it was I. Why had nobody told me that Oxford was as tremendous, as real as this? What a good thing that I had never anticipated that I might be allotted a share in the life of this craggy and pinnacled city – for it was obvious I never should be. I was looking at these marvels as much from outside as if I was a passenger – an aimless hobo – on a train that had stopped at this point only because the signals were against it. There was Oxford, authenticated, grand and final; and here was I – *du bletcher Geselle!*

I think I ought to have known better, and, even allowing for the war-time undercurrent of dejection that troubled my spirit, to have foreseen time and chance still happening both to Oxford and to me. There no doubt is (I might have said to myself) an Oxford that stands fast, a grey and blue Oxford of stone, an Oxford that is

\* *Twenty Years On: Two Harrow Diaries*, by the same author, appeared in our issue for November, 1934. A further instalment of the *Oxford Life and Letters* will be published in a future number.

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there (together with the cow – or is it tree?) even when nobody is looking. But that Oxford, though complete with every architectural feature, is no more than a Baedeker, guide-book city, an Oxford placed by the bad fairy Asterisk under a spell of suspended animation, as it were the Sleeping Beauty.

For I suppose that as I stood there a new Oxford, my own, was already beginning to rise from its foundations. Such a scene of secret activity – under my very nose, and I missed it! My Radcliffe was being reproduced detail for detail, correct to the last urn and scallop. *Ding dong* – a new St. Mary's that belonged to me announced the quarter. Many other bells chimed in. But all the beauty that pervaded the place seemed to me appropriated; it was reserved for men away at the war, and for the august dons who remained. The spirit in my feet, that had guided my footsteps to where I was, now deserted me. Dragging my military boots, I set about finding a modest restaurant, where I could be negligible at my ease. There was a dimly-lit teashop near the other St. Mary's, the one that is broader than it is long, and there in a corner I had a Welsh rarebit with a fried egg, and some cocoa.

### II

The late A. L. Smith, Master of Balliol, made a great effort to keep the corporate life of his college going as much as possible, even during the most exacting days of the war. So it came about that at the beginning of 1917 a fresh assortment of boys from school was coming up to snatch at least a term of university experience – alloyed,

naturally, with drill. We had for some time been wearing khaki armlets with red crowns to show we were a kind of soldiers, not (at eighteen) *embusqués*.

I got into the train at Paddington disgruntled, with a sense of setting out on a forlorn hope. There was another youth of about my age in the compartment. We looked at one another curiously. Yes, he was going up to Oxford for a term too – he was going to Balliol. It was Christopher Bellairs, a Roman Catholic from Downside. He seemed a manly, friendly sort of fellow; it was not hard to guess that he was a Rugby football player. I liked him at once, and my gloom lifted; and when it turned out that we were going to be inhabitants of the same stairs I felt things were not shaping so badly after all.

My rooms were on the first floor, above Christopher's. The windows at one end looked over the main quad., at the other on the fat St. Mary's and the crossroads by Elliston and Cavell's. The scout, dusting vaguely round, told me the rooms had once been occupied by Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Mr. Hilaire Belloc rose in my estimation. There was a faded lodging-house smell; I liked it, and I felt there was something exciting, something promising about the bareness of this apartment.

Later that evening the man overhead suddenly burst into a Chopin scherzo on his piano. Not only did he play well – I recognized the forlorn hope touch in his exasperated fluency. I went straight up, knocked, entered and thanked him: we understood in a flash that we liked many of the same things, and nearly embraced. This talented curly-haired person was Mr.



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Richard Berriedale, the novelist who to-day is the idol of so large a public. No, things were not shaping so badly. And there were other congenial newcomers besides Christopher and Dick. Out of a total Balliol cadre of fifty or so we were soon making up a little society of seven.

Those of us who survived to come back after the war (Christopher Bellairs was the exception) may be said to have had a doubly unique experience of Oxford. During this first, isolated wintry term we found ourselves groping for Oxford traditions with pains which undergraduates are normally spared. Our fellows, but for one or two, were not in the true line of apostolic succession. I suppose we need not have cared about the past; but in fact we did. We bestirred ourselves. With no seniors to overawe us, and no men fresher than ourselves to restore the balance of self-complacency, we picked our own heroes and tried to live up to the example they had never known they were setting us.

I am not quite clear as to how our minds worked. No doubt we were more temperamentally disposed to admire wit and the sociable virtues than the public school kind of ideal of a manly character. Most of us were reacting rather violently against this. Conditions made us tend to be in a high-minded way cynical, and one fact that I know is relevant to our expansion is that Mr. Compton Mackenzie's book, *Sinister Street*, was still, as it were, warm. We could imagine ourselves, but for the devil's intervention, finding our niches even now in that Oxford, and if not yet shining in competition with the chief

wags, at any rate knowing perfectly when and how much to chuckle. Oscar Wilde, too, seemed only just round the corner in front of us. On military occasions, when against all our will and desire we were starting our before-breakfast O.T.C. runs or taking Shotover by storm, it was with epigrams that we tried to console ourselves. Oh, those map-readings, marches and field-days! I believe every member of the corps carried a book of verse in his sack. I remember once, when we were resting near a pig-sty, how one of the brawniest of our comrades (he has since captained England at I shall not say what game) came up to Dick and me and asked us if we didn't really think Shelley was rather good.

At Balliol we did have one very strong link with the past. I mean Mr. Urquhart — 'Sligger,' the wallpaper in whose study was almost obliterated by photographs of men of the *Sinister Street* generation. Some of them had already been killed. Letters from others were spilled on tables and the floor. In the photographs they were shown in easy attitudes; there was nothing stuck up about them, and I seem to recall them for the most part smiling gently. And when Sligger talked about this one and that one he contrived to suggest suave, charming people, very accessible for all their distinction — and the distinction was complex, subtle. Not unreasonably we took it as axiomatic that they had been the flower of England's youth. They may even in some cases have been able to claim, besides intellectual attainments, a fine record of wickets taken or races won. It was on no such grounds that Sligger invited us to

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admire them. He made his older friends seem attractive to us on quite a different kind of report, as with anecdotes of how So-and-so had a funny pet name for his father, or how So-and-so absent-mindedly put on a black tie with a white waistcoat when he went out to dine with a duchess.

When I think of those days it is like remembering two separate existences. The sociable and academic, the inquisitive, creative part of our days was so little compatible with the spirit of *Notes on Tactics* that our connection with this book might have belonged to another time and place. Happily we had in both lives equally the comfort of very generous friendship. It has been said that love is a talkative passion. But love can be conceded points by undergraduate friendship.

We talked ourselves into Oxford men. (I will not say more specifically *Balliol* men, as I doubt whether individually or collectively we were ever typically that: we were perhaps not matter-of-fact enough.) Lounging late at night on our pleasant shabby sofas, we talked about a good many things, not including women. For we knew nothing about women, and we had been taught not to regard them as proper subjects for study. It is true there were other things we had been taught that we paid no attention to, but here circumstances rather abetted our public school preceptors. The only conversation I can remember having about women this term was with Christopher one evening when we were looking down from my windows on the crowd swirling out of the Cornmarket. There were miscellaneous townspeople, and soldiers,

and prostitutes. Christopher, in recommendation of a belief in hell fire, said that it was only fear of it that kept him from lechery. Of course, he was under-estimating his good nature and fastidiousness; and I did not feel he had held me out much of an inducement to adopt his faith.

Two effects of our interminable arguments strike me as noteworthy at this distance of time. First, I see that we were insensibly learning to bestow more than a condescending attention on second- and third-class reputations. This meant a great widening of the horizon. No longer – I shall now speak for myself – did I divide mankind into two groups: on the one hand a few Cæsars, Leonardos and Newtons, on the other all the rest. I began to be intrigued by intermediate characters, people hardly known to fame and obviously destined to have little or no significance for posterity. We happened to hear a good deal about a certain Irish gentleman who had lately died a very holy death – I do not mean at the stake or otherwise sensationally: just quite quietly in his bed. However, he, for instance, rather captured my imagination. Then there was a wistful tall young man, a poet unfit for military service, who had been up before the war, and who now sometimes came on a visit, and spoke a few words to us in an almost inaudible voice. How we discussed him and his verses! At first it had surprised me to find him respecting himself as much as he clearly did. But soon I appreciated how difficult it had been to get recognition as even so minor a poet; then I admired him, and honestly felt his struggles had been worth while.

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Well then – the war. Not one of us could look on it as a political issue, over which our side was in the right and the Germans were in the wrong. I agree we thought the German case the worse. While blaming a few individuals, like the Kaiser, for their part in bringing the world about the ears of all of us, we looked even on them as victims of a colossal, a devastating fatality. Here is what I had written in an essay for Warner at Harrow in June of the previous year: ‘The average German now would sooner be minding his crops than fighting, but he is afraid to say so, lest a squad of Germans, who would also sooner be in the fields at home, should be sent to place him against a wall and shoot him. And this squad would only act in this way for fear of a whole regiment of Germans, who in their hearts would be feeling the same, but would be afraid of a whole army of their fellow Germans.’ I added – trying to point a way out of this vicious circle: ‘So by tolerating a conscript army a nation makes war possible.’ It would have been better to say: ‘makes peace almost impossible.’ And I ended by attacking the soldier’s profession as immoral and anti-human, which is what I think of it to-day.

But our friends at the war were not exactly soldiers. They had simply been overtaken by the great fatality. Why should we want to be spared if they were doomed?

And now term was drawing to a close. Our little group was going to be dissolved, so soon, and perhaps for ever. I rode on a horse hired at the ‘Lamb and Flag’ over Wytham and Shotover

and Cumnor, and spring was stirring; and this beautiful visible world, with the green shoots pushing up, and the water-fowl crying on the ponds, all seemed unnaturally removed from me, as if I were seeing it through the wrong end of a telescope. The weeds were free to grow and spread, the little hills at Wittenham were getting ready to skip, but my face was turned – our faces were turned – to a prospect of nullity and the void. That is what we were like to come to across a river of fire.

In our predicament it was no use looking to *Sinister Street* for hints. The echo of Oscar’s raillery died away in our ears. We had Sligger left; Sligger, who tried to coax us into a suitable attitude with much the same domestic petulance that he used when urging the lazy in future to get up in time for roll-call. Kind Sligger – with his grey wavy hair, his pink cherubic face, his grey suit a little shabby but cut by an excellent tailor: one day all my later memories of him will be eclipsed by the image of him squatting over the fire at the end of that queer term, trying to keep up a sensible grown-up manner as he exhorted us. It was unhappy for him to have to send his new friends away like this. Being a devout Roman Catholic, he at least could believe that the resignation he preached had a special religious value, a positive as well as a narcotic use. Two of us were papists, and I am sure Sligger would have liked to convert the rest of us to his faith, but he had too much delicacy to do what might have seemed like taking advantage just then of our emotional crisis.

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### III

I went for a soldier in a kind of haze. My barracks were in Bloomsbury, and my billet was on the fourth floor of a block of flats. The first thing that happened there was that a fellow-cadet asked me for a loan of half a crown.

Since I was taking the view that the war was a fatality, like a great storm in which I might as well founder with my friends and betters, I thought myself well enough disposed to serving King and Country. This would presumably mean obeying a few sharp but comprehensible orders: springing to attention, marching so many paces forward, and then stopping a bullet. It turned out that the *rôle* expected of me was nothing like so passive. My first duty (as I might have remembered from having been in two O.T.C.s) was to learn the science of killing. And just this, it appeared, I was quite unable to do. My will and memory absolutely refused to support me. I pushed and pulled guns in the grounds of the Foundling Hospital, I listened to lectures and pored over text-books – so far as artillery was concerned my mind remained a blank. From being something of a scholar, and indeed quite a dab at passing exams., I was becoming an idiot.

Though it is true my physical state was poor – I was overgrown, thin and anæmic – I can now write with long enough experience of myself to be able to affirm confidently that it was an inner force, not bodily weakness, which made me impotent to learn about firing guns. At other times, when quite in the pink, I have again

found myself powerless to act as expected – or, on the contrary, I have acted as if under the influence of a stronger will than my own, and taken the line of greatest resistance. The world being as it is, however, the angel's invisible sword has the more often been drawn to reinforce me in *not* acting. And in *not learning*. This nowadays is a feat which it needs nothing less than what a religious person would call the Grace of God to help one accomplish. I see I may be accused of perversity; and one thing I freely admit – it has been no part of my angelic champion's policy to get me rich quick.

One day in the riding school I rolled off a horse from sheer exhaustion. They sent me to a camp on the coast for lighter duty. After a second exhibition of ineffectualness I went to Woolwich to do menial work among the rank and file of the regular army.

These brutalized, kindly men, who used oaths incessantly, were not the worst of companions. (No, they did not use oaths, only one physiological word as noun, adverb and adjective. Damn would have sounded ludicrously precious.) It was the hatefully ugly surroundings in which we went about our business that afflicted me. No trace of a true social or civilized life was tolerated as an ornament in our bleak dormitories. An odd concession I thought – pet dogs were allowed. My neighbour kept a bull pup, whose fleas it must have been that hopped about the pages of *Wuthering Heights* as I read of an evening. The only literature I ever saw the soldiers pick up was the revivalist tracts that a shambling civilian with his hat crushed

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over his ears occasionally distributed throughout the barracks. They did not treat these with scorn. They had an earnest as well as a ribald side to their natures. But they were very elementary humans. Seeing me constantly pale and tired, they could only draw one conclusion: that I spent every free moment out of barracks in debauchery, not confining myself, as they were constrained to do by shallower purses, to a little pleasure of a Saturday night. I tried in vain to undeceive them; they still envied me, though with no ill-feeling.

By this time my Oxford friends had held commissions for some months, and had in certain cases been at the front for what seemed to them an age. Friendship was still their and my chief consolation, friendship which poured itself out unstintingly in letters. I think these letters were our chief insurance against utter pessimism. The solidarity between boys of our years can pass most kinds of love. It was difficult to be honest with one's suffering parents at such a time, and being engaged to be married, as Hugh Talmage was, struck me as like having to wage war on a second front.

In the intervals between letters we fell back on literature, mostly poetry, though for me it was generally prose. The music of poetry, for me, obscured the sense of the message that was being communicated. In the great prose works of imagination I could look more at leisure – while only a tenth part aware of what I was doing – for the implied standards of value to which the authors referred their judgments. Perhaps I cheated myself into finding what I wanted to find: I know I got the

feeling that there were good precedents for the order in which I arranged the important things of life. Of course, if anything, this made my actual situation the harder to bear. I was again beginning to believe that the war was not fatality: not a natural cataclysm. It was man-made. It was terrific wickedness.

I did not get many letters from Sam, my closest Harrow friend on active service, because he was killed in October, 1917, quite soon after going to France. Of the Oxford friends, my best correspondent with the Expeditionary Force in France was Tom Armitage. Tom was not one of our Balliol group, but he had been in the O.T.C. with us – I had met him before going up. Towards the end of January, 1918, I got the following letter from him, an eloquent one, characteristic of his calm and sympathetic personality. But then, the more I read over letters the more I feel that it is impossible to write except characteristically. Here are Tom's words.

'It is almost a month since you wrote to me, and I am still safe and well, at any rate physically, though I confess I don't find my reading as easy as it used to be. . . .

'A great shock came to me the other day. I was sent to do a reconnaissance from the top of a broad hill that lies in front of us, and on my way, about half way up the hill, I passed a little bivouac where two men of a neighbouring battery were dossing down whilst on guard over some material; they told me something about an officer of their battery whom I knew, and I passed on. About two or three minutes afterwards I heard a shell

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coming, and realized that it would fall very near me. It burst, and I looked round to see where it had gone, and saw the smoke rising about two hundred yards to my left. After a moment the bivouac came into my mind, and I noticed that it was not to be seen; so of course I went back, and found the two men wrecked: one so mauled that he died in about two minutes, the other very badly hurt, too, so badly that he died as they were taking him to the dressing station.

'There had been only three of us on that great hill, which must be two or three square miles in area, and for two that shell had been made, filled, fired and guided. Of the many thousand yards it might have chosen to fall in, it must choose the one where two live men were standing.

'What's the use of burrowing down and living like half men? If you have a dug-out, and a shell comes which is for yourself you will be waiting for it at the door. And I don't, I can't believe that it is mere ill-luck. To lose dear life by ill-luck would be too unfair to be borne even under a Providence which tolerates such a war at all. . . .

'One is starved out here for Beauty, particularly the Beauty which is the background to all the pictures and poems and music of the world, the Beauty of Nature. And yet of course we still have our sunsets, the day ends over the lines as it ends over Cumnor Hill – and in Beauty as in other things we become economical. The silhouette of a tree against the sky comes to have as much Beauty as a whole landscape did in other days. . . . How glad I am that I have my poetry to look to.'

Here we see Tom still managing –

and luckily for him, we may feel – to take the fatality view. This hardly meant that he was resigned, except perhaps to dying. Nearly every line in most of his letters proved he was seeking in mind for a charitable code that would make war for ever impossible. His phrases about beauty seem to me themselves beautiful.

A belief in the fundamental, as it were absolute value of beauty had since Harrow days been my own wisdom. (In Keats' view, wisdom ample for any man.) Early in 1915 I had written, in an essay for Warner, words, dictated at the time by my intuition, in the gist of which I have come to find more and more of what appeals to me as truth.

I said: 'The main concern of every man on earth is to be happy. From the wealthy man who can allow himself everything to the ascetic who allows himself nothing, all are in quest of happiness. A man in love is happy, so is the artist who devotes himself to beauty. Whereas the priest seems to despise God's work, and contradicts His statement that "it was good", the artist bears witness to the beauty of creation. Beauty is the mother of all good, and Venus it was, appropriately, who gave birth to love.' Beauty is the mother of all good: already my unelucidated thought was that goodness is less than beauty. Virtue itself, I deeply felt, was only the first of the virtues that are made of necessity. I conceived beauty as absolute: tranquil and changeless. Beauty *was* truth, while goodness was only a shift to prevent a wrong, or to repair a fault on the surface of things.

Reading over Tom's reflections on

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that sunset in Flanders must not seduce me into a digression. Tom was the best of the combatant letter writers. Dick Berriedale was the most amusing and vivacious correspondent of the Oxford friends whose soldiering was done at home. He had a game leg, so was not sent on active service. His style was something more than characteristic. It is endearing him to-day to an ever-huger public.

In the letter I am proceeding to quote, Dick, like Tom, is discovered saying his prayers to beauty. His denunciation of the war horror has a pleasant ebullience that might have failed even him if he had been in the trenches. He writes from a camp in Hertfordshire, from his billet, which is a villa called 'Lebanon.' He adds in brackets: 'There are no cedars.'

'My DEAR PETER,

'I do apologize most humbly for my nauseaousness, but to-day is the first day that I have been able to write.

'I am on what is called an instructions course. I am the only second lieutenant, the only one who has not been out to France for ages and who has not come back with four Military Crosses, and the work is extraordinarily hard, so you can imagine my state of mind.

'We go out wonderful walks and look at some quiet valley with heather on its sides and pine trees waving themselves at the bottom, and we spit "*re-entrant*" in its face. We go on a little further and see a hill with a fairy castle basking on the top, and we lay bare its nakedness by trying to think if it would shelter "Huns". We carry rifles, we deliver lectures. I delivered one on the Organization of the Army

with more success than I had dared hope.

'And meanwhile youth is running away faster and faster, and any singing one did in better times seems more and more faint and unreal. . . . But you know, things really do matter, and one's old love of beauty, and of our friends, and Chopin and Beethoven, and sunshine and moonlight. . . .

'Even now, with my mind full of the undigested elements of slaughter, I pick up Swinburne and weep with joy, I ride through a wood like the Forest and sing and sing and finally get beyond singing and simply shout and leap, making the deer snuff their idiotic noses, and almost putting my hateful knee out.

'Soon I shall be in London, and we shall all have a splendid binge.

'Cheerio -

'Oh Lord - the sight of *Notes on Tactics* makes me depressed again!'

About the time this letter was written the Germans began their desperate offensive of March, 1918. Tom Armitage was at a dangerous point in our breaking line. However, he came safely through the retreat. Christopher Bellairs had been killed during a bombing flight over the fortress of Mainz.

The Germans were held; the tables were turned; still the slaughter went on.

Aylmer Prescott, a Harrow friend in the Guards, writing from 'an old German hut in what was once the village of A——, now of course merely bricks,' sent me an appalling casualty list. 'I suppose you have seen of Pongo Martin's of Rendall's death? Also Sinclair junior, who was in my

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forms with me for four years, and again Freddie Holden on the 27th? I last saw him at the Savoy with his fiancée. He had more luck than most however as he had reached the age of twenty. I am now the sole survivor of our trio, Jennings, Holden and myself, and I begin to feel that I have passed my allotted span. The regiment seems to have had a bad time lately; I knew most of the casualties. Many of them were junior to me. . . . My God, there are few men out here who do not think that a few weeks of a German army in England would do some of the people there any amount of good! It is our loathsome politicians who keep the war going . . .'

What bitterness Aylmer showed (there was plenty more of it) may be excused in a high-spirited boy of nineteen who was seeing his friends killed off one by one under his eyes. He ended on his more familiar light-hearted note. He, personally, was feeling quite 'chirpy', as the novelty had not yet worn off. And did I realize that this was the longest letter he had written from France? 'Not even my fiancées have received more than two pages at a time! So do buck up and send me a long screed, as you know how your abstract wanderings bring back old times: over the fire in your room before prayers – hardly two years ago.

There is a Destiny, what? Well, Peter, please don't forget. I know it is not much to ask you, as I have seen you writing pages in your diary with inconceivable rapidity, *à grande vitesse*, what?'

My own inglorious army career had come to an end before this. I had lain for weeks in a service hospital, not even fit (in the opinion of the kind elderly R.A.M.C. doctor who had taken care of me) to be discharged.

My organism had broken down. More vigorous but also more shattered bodies were brought to my ward, and I got used to watching pain and death. But things were not always equally bad. Resting made me gradually forget the strain of the last months, and I read Anatole France and *La Chartreuse de Parme*, smoked the Woodbines that Messrs. Wills offered us free, and smacked my lips over the military tapioca. The most confiding of my mates was a convalescent sergeant with a row of medals. He had done some brave things; but the exploit he best liked to recite was how he had bombed two hundred German prisoners. A man of very humble origin, he attributed his success in life to the firmness of a devoted mother, who had taken the poker to him if ever he tried to shirk Sunday School.



# Edward

## by H. H. Bashford

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### I

AMONGST the most prominent inhabitants of the little country town where my brother and I went to school, was a retired missionary of immense physical stature known as the Reverend Braybourne Luke. In his early days he had been a backwoodsman in Australia, where he had experienced a conversion of the Pauline type; and he had subsequently spent half a lifetime on the North-West Frontier of India preaching the Gospel to various lawless tribes. He was reputed to be the master of at least seventeen Indian dialects, into several of which he had translated portions of the Bible; and with his shaggy eyebrows, Semitic nose, and wind-blown, rebellious beard he might well have been a Victorian incarnation of St. John the Baptist.

I suppose that he must either have possessed a private income or received a pension from the society for which he had worked, for, although he lived in a very small house, he had a wife and five children; and it was only occasionally that he preached in one or other of the town churches. When he did so, his sermons were of an extremely vehement and uncompromising character; and I have never

forgotten his indictment of a touring company then playing at the local theatre. It was presenting the drama known as the *Sign of the Cross* – a title with Roman Catholic implications – and I can still hear the words shattering the silence of the church as the Reverend Braybourne Luke pronounced them.

‘The Sign of the Cross,’ he contemptuously thundered, and then, after a pregnant pause, ‘the Mark of the Beast.’

He also electrified one of the neighbouring villages, the pride of whose church was a picture of the Madonna and Child, by insisting on covering this up with a spare surplice before he entered the pulpit.

I believe that neither of these incidents particularly endeared him to certain sections of the community. But in the evangelical circles to which my mother belonged, they met with the warmest approval; and I remember the awe with which, in the middle ‘nineties, I saw him striding to church on a Sunday morning, flanked by his wife, nearly as tall as himself – a delicate but by no means negligible lady – his three sons and two daughters.

With the exception of Edward, the

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eldest, they were pale and willowy reflections of their parents; and with no exceptions at all, they were completely dominated by the personalities of their parents. But Edward, who was my senior by three years, had been very kind to me at school; and although by temperament he was as casual and lethargic as was possible in such a household, I regarded him, both for his own sake and his father's, as counsellor and guide as well as friend.

It was not a friendship of which his parents particularly approved, since they considered my own influence to be rather subversive. But he was once allowed to accompany me on a week's bicycle tour, during which we rode prodigious distances on solid tyres, and in the course of which – I think it was at Winchester – we each smoked our first cigarette. This, I must admit, was upon my suggestion, although he made the actual purchase; and it had to be kept, of course, the profoundest secret from the Reverend Braybourne and Mrs. Luke. But they intuitively suspected, I think, that something of the kind had happened. He was never allowed to accompany me again; and when I left school for the prairies of Western Canada, they were unanimous in commending my decision.

Meanwhile Edward had been dedicated by his parents to the vocation that they had followed in India; and, although his scholarship was never his strongest quality, he had managed to pass an examination set by the College of Preceptors. This had permitted him to embrace the career of medicine, a valuable adjunct to mis-

sionary work; and when I returned from Canada it was to find that he had gone to London and was living in a Home for medical missionary students.

Personally I had come back full of enthusiasm for the prairies, three stone heavier than when I had left, and with every intention, if I could raise sufficient capital, of buying a farm out there of my own. Failing this, I had letters in my pocket from two farmers offering me work; and I was deriving considerable satisfaction from the fact that I had paid for my journey home out of my own earnings. But I had reckoned without the impressionableness of youth – or at any rate my own youth – to contrasting atmospheres; without my mother, whom I found anxious and disturbed about sundry adventures of my younger brother; and last of all without Edward, who urgently invited me to visit him in London. He was extremely anxious, he said, that I should not finally commit myself to an inferior life as a Canadian farmer without fully considering the more spiritual possibilities afforded to a medical missionary.

It was a letter that my mother, to whom this world was purely transitional, regarded as of the highest importance; and it served to remind her that I had recently been left a small legacy, a fact that had passed from her memory. Unfortunately it was in the hands, she believed, till I came of age, of a particularly 'worldly' cousin – an ex-cavalry colonel, whose devotion to polo probably exceeded, she feared, his interest in the salvation of souls. But there could be no harm,

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she thought, in writing to the lawyers and inquiring the amount of the legacy; and in any case she was strongly in favour of my going to see Edward.

This was my second visit to London since I had come back, the first having been paid to a young Englishman, who had been working not far from me in Canada and had returned, as I had done, to spend the winter at home. He had taken me to the Oxford to hear Marie Lloyd, had rather scared me by his knowledge of metropolitan night life, and had nonchalantly suggested that we should finish the evening by picking up a couple of girls. I had manfully replied that I should be delighted for him to do this, although I was not quite in the mood for it myself; and altogether I had said good-bye to him with considerable relief.

It was also a relief to know that with Edward I should not be faced with a similar problem, although it might well be that my future destiny depended upon the interview. He had invited me to tea in the Medical Missionary Home, which was in a North London suburb hitherto unknown to me; and I found, when I arrived, that it consisted of two large houses in a rather drab, mid-Victorian terrace. But they appeared to be well kept. The door-plate and door-knocker shone; and it was not without a certain trepidation that I ascended the steps. It was true of course that, for the last two years, I had been knocking about in Manitoba; that I had learned to play poker and had owned a couple of bronchos; and that I had broken and back-set, for my last employer, fifty acres of virgin

prairie. But I was still under eighteen. I had forgotten all that I had learned at school; and what were my accomplishments, such as they were, to the ardour and erudition with which I was about to be confronted? Even the servant, I felt, who opened the door, instinctively realized that I was not of the true fold; and even Edward, since I had last seen him, seemed to have become invested with a new authority.

But he received me with a warmth that, for the moment at any rate, made me forget my shyness; and as we climbed upstairs through faintly contending odours of cooking, floor-polish and linoleum, he described the occupants of the various bedrooms that we passed on the way. Altogether there were about fourteen students in the house, varying from nineteen to twenty-five years of age, of whom his particular heroes appeared to be two named Carthew and Rogers. Carthew, he told me, was a first-class athlete, who played both cricket and football for his hospital and had also been selected on several occasions to represent the Corinthians. Rogers was not an athlete, but as nearly a saint as Edward considered it possible to be; and the two of them conducted a Bible class for upper-class children that had been wonderfully blessed of God. There were also Mallam, a distinguished chess-player, a true Christian but the possessor of a mordant wit; little Robinson, who had worked in a grocer's shop; an extremely eloquent Jew called Cohen; a parson named Standing, who enjoyed the unique distinction of having previously been at Cambridge; and half a dozen

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others, each with some outstanding quality of scholarship, holiness, or moral courage.

It was an impressive list, and in Edward's own room I found another testimony to the spirit of the house. Besides the iron bedstead and wooden wash hand-stand, it contained a small stove; and upon the table beside this was a volume of Cunningham's *Practical Anatomy*, heavily underlined and with many marginal notes. Next to it was a Bible, also lying open and also heavily underlined; and upon the bookshelf were mysterious volumes dealing with the frog and organic chemistry. Even more remote from all my previous experience was a long wooden box, like a miniature coffin, carelessly filled with human bones, of which Edward already knew the Latin names. Apart from all this, however, as I was relieved to notice, there were certain respects in which he had not changed. In spite of his enthusiasm, his naturally sleepy eyes were still surrounded with gentle creases; and there was still the prominent front tooth endowing him, especially when he smiled, with the expression of a kindly family governess. He stood beaming at me through his spectacles, his wrinkles and puckers deepened with pleasure; and a minute or two later there floated up to us the notes of a bell summoning us to tea.

## II

We went downstairs again, and in the lobby that connected the two houses he introduced me to Dr. Moffat, the superintendent of the Home. He had

of course already described him to me as the principal figure of the house – a tall old man, strikingly erect, with scrupulously parted white hair, a snowy beard, fresh complexion, and the high cheek-bones of the lowland Scot. Behind him lay many years as a medical missionary in China, endowing him with an almost apostolic prestige; his frosty blue eyes would have gone to the stake and were conscious of the power that would have made them do so; and his dignity was enhanced by the spotlessness of his linen, his turn-down collar and shining cuffs, and a sober but very well-made suit of dark Scotch broadcloth. From his six feet three inches, however, he stooped and greeted me with a kindly word or two of welcome; and I also shook hands with the thin and rather querulous lady, who had been his partner for nearly forty years. They sat one at each end of the long table, about which the students were ranged, a large leg of mutton in front of Dr. Moffat and a tea-urn in front of his wife.

As a guest, I sat at Dr. Moffat's right hand, with Edward to support me on the other side; and opposite to me was Urquhart, Dr. Moffat's elder son, who had just gained a medal at a hospital examination. He was brilliantly clever, as Edward had informed me; and his china-blue eyes seemed already to have divined my own ignorance. But, owing to the rapidity with which he fed, he was a rather spasmodic conversationalist. On the other hand, when he did speak it was with a resonance and finality that silenced every other voice at the table, including that of his larger and equally

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able but more easy-going younger brother.

As for the meal itself, which was partaken of at six o'clock, it was a curious compound of dinner and tea, substantial helpings of mutton and vegetables being followed by equally substantial slices of bread and jam. But it was ingested to an accompaniment of dedicated gaiety that I found more and more hypnotic; and I was deeply thrilled, as we rose from the table, when Rogers slipped his arm into mine. He was the senior man in the house, and, apart from his sons, tacitly understood to be Dr. Moffat's favourite; and he had the fascinating gift of breaking from a moment of silent prayer into a wholly beguiling and mischievous smile. He was so glad, he said, to meet a pal of dear old Edward's. He hoped that I wouldn't find them all too forbidding; and he looked forward, from a hint or two dropped by Edward, to a far greater intimacy in the near future. Unfortunately my two years in the unredeemed West had failed to endow me with much in the way of small talk; and I could only stammer a word or two of confused but entirely heartfelt thanks.

'Isn't he splendid?' said Edward.

I nodded.

'And although he's a Christian,' said Edward, 'he's one of the most popular men at Hospital.'

He paused for a moment before we entered the common sitting-room.

'And I should think he's saved more souls,' he added, 'than anybody here.'

It was also Rogers, I found, who was to conduct evening prayers, to

which we were summoned at nine o'clock; and I was further captivated by the modesty of the comments with which he interspersed his reading of the Bible, and the happy blend of reverence and intimacy with which he phrased his extempore prayer. This included thanks to the Almighty for His assistance to 'one of us' in obtaining a medal at hospital, and a petition for special guidance to anybody present who might be on the brink of an important decision. This was a personal reference that deeply moved me; and when Dr. Moffat invited me into his study, I had already abandoned any idea of returning to the prairies, provided the funds were forthcoming to make me a doctor. Ultimately they were; and a few months later, having passed the necessary preliminary examination, I found myself enrolled under Dr. Moffat and occupying a small room next to Edward's.

### III

That was in the year after Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, and for the first few months, at any rate, I experienced all the ardours of belonging to a devoted and divinely privileged little community. Before each of us had joined it, he had filled in a declaration of faith, which included a belief in eternal punishment; and it was an understood thing that, at our respective hospitals, we should already regard ourselves as missionaries. This implied, without further argument, that we should be teetotallers and non-smokers; that we should protest, either by word or action, against the use of

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expletives and the narration of improper stories; and that we should take every chance of tackling – tackling was the word used – our fellow-students about the health of their souls. If all this involved a certain amount of unpopularity, there was Scriptural warrant for our being ready to welcome it; and there was a certain exaltation in returning every evening to compare notes in our spiritual garrison.

Rogers, for example, was able to tackle almost anybody, owing to his smile and social charm; and Carthew's athletic prowess was held to be such an asset as largely to absolve him from the need of verbal testimony. But for the rest of us it was different. We had to devise ways and means. Two or three would read their bibles in the Hospital smoking-room; another would attach texts to the handle-bar and saddle of his bicycle; and the remarks evoked by these measures afforded opportunities of commending our gospel.

For my own part, my spiritual fervour never quite overcame my shyness sufficiently to do very much of this individual 'tackling'; and it was with a sense of half-guilty relief that I discovered the same to be true of Edward. But I managed to perform my share of the various duties arranged for the students of the Home on Sundays, which included the conducting of prayer-meetings and evangelical services at a medical mission in North London, and the addressing by each of us in turn of a large congregation at a chapel in Shoreditch. In addition to these official and compulsory activities, Carthew and Rogers had their chil-

dren's bible-class; Mallam and one of the others held a similar afternoon class in a neighbouring suburb; and Edward persuaded me to join him in yet another, for boys only, which he proposed to found.

I have always looked back upon this feat with something of amazement in view of what Edward and I afterwards became, and as a small illustration, perhaps, of the world's astonishing kindness – or at any rate response – to enthusiastic youth. Having selected our region, a quiet middle-class area of substantial houses and large gardens, we fixed upon a house that, by its position and size, appeared suitable for the purpose; and without hesitation we knocked at the door and asked to see the owner. She proved to be a wealthy, elderly lady, who listened with sympathy to our requirements, took us into a sitting-room that she seldom used, and forthwith placed it at our disposal. We then made a house-to-house visitation – ourselves unknown to people unknown to us; and a fortnight later we were able to inform the Home – not, I am afraid, without a certain pride – that we too had started a bible-class of no less than twenty boys.

Such was our life; so complete a contrast to the one I had been leading upon the prairies that I again find it difficult to understand how I could have been equally happy in both. Most of us were up, for instance, at five in the morning, but to pore over books and not to feed horses. Breakfast was at half-past seven; and by nine o'clock we were in the various lecture-rooms of our hospitals. At six we assembled again for high tea.

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We worked in our bedrooms till nine. Each of us in turn was responsible for the conduct of evening prayers; and it was only for half an hour or so that we then relaxed a little over glasses of milk and ginger-nuts.

It was true that some argument begun at tea might occasionally be continued in the common-room; and I remember earnest discussions as to whether it were permissible for a true Christian to attend the theatre. None of us did so. Indeed, I was the only one, I think, who had ever actually been inside such a place. But there had once been a student, it seemed, in the Home, an undoubted Christian, who had seen no harm in it. The Royal Academy, too, with its pictures of unclothed females, was regarded as an institution better avoided; and there was considerable agitation, I remember, when one of our number – his name was Raymond, and he was the grandson of an earl – appeared in a specimen of the high double collars that had just come into fashion. Was this compatible, it was asked, with the highest spiritual life? The majority of us held that it was scarcely so.

How far this was typical of similar communities, at the same period, I cannot say. But it was certainly typical of a good many with which our work and sympathies brought us in contact; and it was chiefly from friends made at Hospital that I began to understand and make allowances for other points of view. Although in the Home we were only concerned with medicine as a method of commending the Christian gospel, I found myself becoming intimate with students

of my own age who regarded it as an end in itself. To make some discovery that should conquer a disease – even to elucidate a little the mysteries of man's origin – I realized that they were dedicating themselves to these objects with an astonishingly resolute and selfless ardour. I also found that they were ready to discuss my own objects in an entirely friendly and reverent fashion, but from a standpoint that had already considered problems of whose very existence I was totally ignorant.

Moreover, they were nice people. They were essentially decent. Many of them were interested in art and letters; and I found, in talking to them, my own love of both gradually coming again to the surface. One or two of them even held that the creation of a great work of art was a spiritual achievement of so high an order that it might well be the highest possible; and I found it increasingly difficult either to ignore their arguments or believe that they were destined to eternal damnation.

But these were not the views held in the Home, although it was conceded, a trifle reluctantly, that certain books, poems, and pictures might be useful adjuncts in bringing souls to Christ. To be so accepted, however, their message must be unmistakable. The mere presentation of beauty was not sufficient; and indeed it would be scarcely possible for a true Christian to spend his time either in producing or looking at it.

By slow degrees, therefore, I became aware of questionings in my mind which, from time to time, I confided to Edward, who listened

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sympathetically, although, as it seemed to me, without much real understanding. Medical research he admitted to be of great value. But poetry and pictures he had never much cared about; and he was finding it sufficiently difficult to amass enough learning to pass his medical examinations. He had already failed twice in the second of these required by the Royal Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians; and he had been summoned in consequence to Dr. Moffat's study for a kindly but serious interview. There were also two other matters upon which he had been remonstrated with, so far without any great effect. One of these was his attachment to water; he was really good at swimming and diving; and failing opportunities to do either, he would soak for hours in the only available bathroom. The other was his inability – becoming more and more pronounced – to overcome his congenital desire for sleep, with the regrettable consequence that his attendance at morning prayers, held just before breakfast, was extremely irregular.

But he was 'sound.' Dr. Moffat was satisfied of that, which was, after all, the important thing; and although he was beginning to regard him as an incorrigibly weaker brother, there was still a twinkle for him in his frosty eyes. Moreover, he was the son of his father, a rugged fellow patriarch, whereas I had no such credentials; and I became aware that my own soundness was not being quite so unquestioned. This was not put into words. I was still being entrusted with my share of evangelical duties. But it was there, and the position was not

improved, I am afraid, by an act that I cannot excuse.

This was connected with our breakfast porridge, of which we were each given an enormous plateful that had to be consumed, in accordance with the tradition of the Home, preferably with salt but certainly without sugar. It was a tradition strongly upheld by Dr. and Mrs. Moffat and even more vehemently by Urquhart; but I had discovered that there were at least a few of us who would have greatly preferred, since we were obliged to eat our porridge, to have it sweetened. Being one of them, it suddenly occurred to me that saccharin tablets were small, and that they might be inserted surreptitiously enough to escape even Urquhart's eye. Having conceived this idea, I made a general present of it; and although it was frowned upon unanimously, I put it into practice in spite of various gentle but earnest protests. I was also successful, or so I fondly imagined, in avoiding the notice of Dr. and Mrs. Moffat and presumably of Urquhart, who would certainly have told them if he had happened to observe me.

But at the best it was not quite the act of a martyr – or a potential martyr in India or China – nor was it unobserved, although, as I was given to understand, Dr. Moffat did not consider it worth mentioning. It was merely one of those things that men like Carthew or Rogers would not have done, or indeed I myself if I had previously made it a matter of prayer. But I had not – an evidence in itself of the changes that were to cause my departure, though I cannot honestly



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say that these were wholly, or even very largely, doctrinal. Nothing in fact was further from my mind when, towards the middle of my second year, Mallam, who was my senior by three years, came into my room and shut the door. For some time, it appeared, he had been suffering from dyspepsia, and he considered the *régime* of the Home to be entirely responsible. He thought a six o'clock meal consisting of sausages and bread and jam, or roast beef and cake, to be perfectly horrible; and he was sick to death of porridge and cold ham at seven-thirty every morning. In short, he was going to leave and find lodgings – had in fact found them already – together with a landlady who would give him a decent late dinner and eggs and bacon at a reasonable hour.

I stared at him in amazement, not untinged with envy.

'Eggs and bacon?' I repeated.

'Yes and toast.'

He hesitated for a moment before he made the great confession.

'Followed by a pipe. Would you care to join me?'

I glanced round the room, but the walls were still standing; and then I remembered Edward. Though I well knew what my answer would be, I ought at least, I felt, to consult him. Mallam agreed and said that he was in the bathroom, where I found him a gentle pink and enveloped by steam. As tactfully as I could, I told him of Mallam's proposition.

'I suppose you couldn't possibly come too?' I asked.

He blinked at me solemnly but not, as I observed, in anger; and there was even, to my surprise, something

wistful in his eye. But it was out of the question, he explained, even if he had desired to. Being the son of a missionary, he was there on special terms. His few shillings of pocket-money were doled out to him by his father; and it was only by remaining in the Home that he could ever hope to become qualified. A trifle reluctantly, he emerged from the bath. Carthew and Rogers, he said, were waiting for it.

'I suppose if you do go,' he said, 'you'll have a bathroom to yourselves – you and Mallam, I mean.'

I supposed that we should. He put on his spectacles

'But of course we'll still,' I added, 'spend part of our holidays together'

He looked with affection at the subsiding bath-water.

'Then I suppose you are going?' he said.

I told him that I thought so, but I remember feeling rather a beast. Dr. Moffat received my decision with equanimity.

## IV

Though we met on Sundays for as long as we conducted our bible-class, it was inevitable that I should see less of Edward; and it was not very often, though we attended the same Hospital, that I ever stumbled upon him there. We were at different stages of our medical career, and owing to his inability to pay the small subscriptions, he did not belong to any of the clubs or societies in which its students foregathered. Occasionally I would find him in some corner of the library

## Edward

or museum, poring over a book or a pathological specimen, or trying to make up for some of the sleep that was denied him at the Home; and from time to time he would join me for a week or two on a Northamptonshire farm where I used to spend some of the long vacation. He was entirely happy here, where we lived the life of farm-labourers, and where there was a mill-pool into which he could dive; but it was a far different Edward that greeted me with increasing wanness on the rare occasions when I revisited the Home.

He had now become, owing to the passage of the years and his continued failure to impress successive examiners, the senior student of the Home, but only by virtue of longevity. As an example, it was tacitly admitted that such a position could never be his; and his absence from morning prayers had long ago been taken for granted. But for the fact, indeed, that he was still believed to be sound and that his formidable father was still alive, it seemed very doubtful if Dr. Moffat could have continued to recommend him as an inmate. But he had become 'poor Edward,' I gathered, whenever Dr. Moffat referred to him, and in the end he survived even Dr. Moffat's departure.

This had involved, as Edward confided to me, some rather uncomfortable moments with the new superintendent; and to the rising generation of earnest young Christians his presence in the Home was frankly an enigma. But the end came at last. Towards the close of his seventh year, and by some miracle, he passed the last of his finals; and it was then that he took my breath away by casually

informing me that he had ceased to be a Christian. It appeared that somehow or other – as a rule he read nothing at all – he had come upon a translation of Renan's *Life of Christ*; and having read it with surprise and attention, the matter had been settled for him for ever. I found myself in the anomalous position, therefore, of arguing with Edward from the believer's point of view, and trying to persuade him that Renan's work, admirable as it might be, was not necessarily the last word.

But it was in vain. Identifying Christianity with everything that his own home and Dr. Moffat's had stood for, Renan had provided him with a door of escape; and with a sigh of relief he had slipped through it. Henceforth he could sleep when he liked and browse at large in the world's pastures; and he had no intention of ever being beguiled again into the bonds of captivity. Nor was he; and in his future and erratic wanderings about the earth, it was only at odd intervals that I ever heard from him or met him in the flesh. A month after he qualified, he sailed for India – he had always had a partiality for sun and warmth – and I heard rumours of a disaster in an Indian village where he was inoculating the inhabitants against the Plague. It was not his fault, and he was not, I gathered, unduly perturbed about it. But it was the sort of thing, I felt, that would somehow have happened to him; and a few years later, he wrote to me from the heart of West Africa, where he was holding some appointment under the Colonial Office.

But I saw him in England just

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before he was married – owing to a mistake about the time, the ceremony had to be postponed, I remember – and while I was on my own honeymoon in the Scotch Highlands, he sent me a large dictionary and a second-hand typewriter. By the time I had returned he was back in West Africa, and then for some years I heard nothing. But in the middle of

the Great War I happened to meet a man, who had been campaigning in the Cameroons, and who had come across Edward in some remote village of which he had forgotten the name. He had appeared to be well, he said, but rather preoccupied in conducting rehearsals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with an extremely enthusiastic, if slightly bewildered, all-native cast.

### OVERHEARD

SIR,

A friend of mine in New England has a neighbour who has received a Government cheque for 1,000 dollars this year for not raising hogs. So my friend now wants to go into the business himself, he not being very prosperous just now; he says, in fact, that the idea of not breeding hogs appeals to him very strongly.

Of course, he will need a hired man, and that is where I come in. I write to you as to your opinion of the best kind of farm not to raise hogs on, the best strain of hogs not to raise, and how best to keep an inventory of hogs you are not raising. Also, do you think capital could be raised by issuance of a non-hog-raising gold bond?

The friend who got the 1,000 dollars got it for not raising 500 hogs. Now we figure we might easily not raise 1,500 or 2,000 hogs, so you see the possible profits are only limited by the number of hogs we do not raise.

The other fellow had been raising hogs for forty years and never made more than 400 dollars in any one year. Kind of pathetic, isn't it, to think how he wasted his life raising hogs when he could have made so much more not raising them?

I will thank you for any advice you may offer.

HAROLD TRUEMAN.

Letter from the *New York Financial Chronicle*.

# An Escape

## by Martin Armstrong

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CHARLOTTE TAUNTON, spinster, tall, slim, aged forty-one, drawing her leather boa more tightly round her throat, paused in her progress along the Easthaven pier and gazed down at the cold grey water washing restlessly among the tangle of rusty iron posts and ties beneath her. A ragged coating of green, like torn shreds of dripping felt, clung to the lower parts of the structure, and a cold smell of seaweed, unpleasantly like the smell of sewage, breathed up from below. She shivered and continued on her way to the pierhead, the smooth planking resounding hollow under her feet. There was something both exciting and depressing in that sound. She never failed to thrill to the sense of having left the shore, of walking in mid-air on a thin, echoing floor between the sky and the dangerous water below. And she thrilled, too, to a vague, ever-recurring hope. For on a pier there was not only that sense of physical adventure, but of human adventure also. One never knew whom one might meet. You met people, more people, in the town of course; but in the safety and conventions of town, meetings were dull and commonplace. On a pier you had left the shelter of civilization, you had ventured into the wilds. It was dangerous, exciting,

private, especially at the far end, where the footway circled the pavilion surrounded by its nooks and shelters, where couples could sit unnoticed. Yes, that knocking of one's footsteps on a pier was exciting, but it was depressing too. She had walked so many piers and had been so often disappointed. She sighed. She had arrived only that morning at Easthaven and already the thrill of arrival had worn off and she was beginning almost to dread the long chilly month ahead of her. For in her lonely round from boarding-house to boarding-house, Easthaven was the resort she liked least. That was why she always came there in March, a month in which every place was horrid. In fact, the only good point about Easthaven was Miss Kittridge's boarding-house. It was comfortable and the food was good: it made Easthaven worth while. Her brother William, who looked after her affairs and sent her her sixteen pounds every month, had done his best to persuade her to settle down in rooms of her own, but she had tried it once and found it deadly dull. She preferred to wander. It was a relief to pack up, escape, move on to some new but not unfamiliar place, to travel by train, get in and out of cabs, arrive and be welcomed at the

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next place. 'How nice to see you again, Miss Taunton. You're quite a stranger.' It gave her a sense of freedom and independence. Sometimes she allowed herself to imagine more august intimations of these flittings. 'Miss Taunton has left No. 7 Elsted Place, Borton-on-Sea, and has arrived at Easthaven on a short visit.' If she had been rich or had married a rich and important husband, announcements of that kind would have proclaimed her comings and goings.

In the old days, before their father had died and left them, not, as they had been led to expect, comfortably provided for, but with a wretched £6,000 each in 3½ per cents., it had been taken for granted that she would make a good match, for she had been a stylish and not bad-looking girl. But these expectations had not been fulfilled. She had only had one proposal, George Ash's, and she had refused him. Poor George, he was nice enough, but she wasn't in love with him, and it was unthinkable, in those days, that she should marry a man she didn't love. Why should she? Ah, if only she had known what she knew now, she would have taken him like a shot. After all, they would have got along well enough and perhaps they would have had children. And even if not, there would have been – yes, why not admit it? – the physical contact, the escape from this cold, unfulfilled, unmated existence that so horribly drove one in on oneself.

A loud, cold hiss from the muddy water under the pier made her shiver again, and once more she caught her camphor-smelling feather boa about her throat and quickened her pace.

The pier seemed to be totally deserted. Would there be anyone, she wondered, in the shelters round the pavilion?

Sometimes, during the last year or two, she had had desperate ideas, impulses to fling overboard all her old standards of gentility and just snatch at any man for a husband; any, that is, whom she felt she could sympathize with and bear to live with. There was Dent, for instance, James Dent, the man who kept the little shop on the front at Borton where she got her daily paper. He was a dear little man, gentle, polite, friendly, and always so neat and clean, and he always gave her such a charming welcome when she turned up again after a year's absence. Each morning, during the month she spent at Borton, she would pause, after buying her paper, and have a little chat with him. Of course, he would never have dreamt of making any advances, even if it had ever entered his head to do so; but it would not, perhaps, have been difficult for her to lead him on, allow him by degrees to realize. . . . However, it was really, of course, out of the question, oh, absolutely: nothing more than an absurd and desperate daydream. Goodness, how horrified William would have been! Not that that would have mattered. William was horrified even at her boarding-house existence, had always bothered her to 'live decently,' as he said, till they had finally agreed to differ. They never met nowadays and corresponded only on business. Still, even from her own point of view, James Dent, a small shop-keeper, would have been too much of a come-down. After all, one had to cling to some sort

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of position. If only that chance meeting at Riverport three years ago had come to something. Ah, that was a very different matter. She had been sitting in one of a row of deck chairs, listening to the band, when a tall, smart, grey-haired man with an eyeglass had taken the seat next hers – it was the only one vacant. She had dropped her umbrella and he had picked it up for her, and then, as there was at the moment an interval in the music, he had begun to talk . . . about Wagner, rheumatism, the Riviera. He was obviously a man of means and very much of a gentleman. He had asked her if she was staying at the Metropole and she had told him a little fib. No, she had said, she was staying in rooms. She didn't like hotels. He had left her thrilled and happy: it was as if she had re-visited the old leisurely, dignified life of ten years ago. But when she had met him next day on the Esplanade he had cut her dead; hadn't, it seemed, even recognized her. She did not know his name, but she had invented a name to suit him, Sir Charles Vere; and still, at odd moments, she spun fantasies round him, fantasies that always began with the moment when she had recognized him coming towards her down the Esplanade. He caught sight of her and his face lighted up: he raised his hat. 'You again? How charming! Might I . . . would you mind if I walked with you? It's so pleasant to meet a kindred spirit.' And, after that, they would meet again and one day he would invite her to lunch at the Metropole. And then, at the end of the month, when she told him she was leaving Riverport, he would pro-

pose, sometimes as they sat together in the sunshine listening to the band, sometimes on a settee in the lounge of the Metropole, as they sat together after luncheon sipping their coffee. 'Sir Charles and Lady Vere have returned to Eaton Square for the season.' Absurd, consoling dreams! Often she plunged into them deliberately, imagining long dialogues, the conversations of two infinitely leisured and infinitely cultured friends. Well, there was small hope of meeting a Sir Charles here, in bleak, deserted, wintry Easthaven.

It was really too cold at the end of the pier. A gusty March wind was driving little whirlpools of sand and paper along the draughty flooring and among the deserted shelters. Miss Taunton turned and hurried back towards the protection of the town, the ends of her feather boa flying before her.

\* \* \*

Admittedly Herbert Wilkins was very far from being a Sir Charles. On the other hand, though obviously not quite a gentleman, he was very much nearer one than poor little Dent, the newsagent. She encountered him on the pier two days after her arrival at Easthaven. The weather had improved a little. It was still cold and gusty, but now and then a few acres of pale sunshine glided imperceptibly up the coast and lingered for a while over Easthaven; and out on the leaden sea, midway between shore and horizon, pools of coldly shimmering fire were poured from the clouds through misty golden funnels and shone till they burned themselves out. A few sombre, coated figures

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walked the pier and Charlotte Taunton too was tempted out as far as the pavilion. As she reached it a searchlight of pale sunshine focussed itself on the pierhead and she paused near the rails on the leeward side to enjoy the transitory blessing. It was soon gone and she moved on again towards the town.

A few yards ahead of her walked a tall, broad-shouldered man in a blue coat and bowler hat, his hands in his pockets and a book under his arm. She had just noted the blue velvet collar, noted that the coat looked new and well made, when he dropped his book. A moment later she had reached it, stooped, and picked it up. It was *Sherlock Holmes*. The man had stopped and turned, and now, as she held the book out to him, he raised his hat and smiled. 'Thank you!' he said. 'Thank you! Very much obliged!'

His voice was quiet and very deep, with that resonant burr heard in the lower notes of a 'cello, and in the 'Thank you!' there was a slight broadening of the 'a' which suggested Manchester or Bradford. In the slight embarrassment of the moment she hardly noticed his face.

'Never do to lose it,' he went on amicably. 'It's all I have to read here.'

That additional remark had somehow made it natural that they should walk on together. 'You like *Sherlock Holmes*?' she asked.

'M . . . yes!' His tone was judicial. 'Yes, I find it interesting. But they're a bit too clever.'

'Who?' she asked. 'Sherlock Holmes?'

'Him and the others, the villains.'  
'Cleverer than real villains, you mean?'

'And real detectives.'

She gave a little laugh. 'Perhaps! But if they weren't, the stories might not be worth reading.'

He laughed too. 'Quite right: and that would be a pity. You want something interesting to read in a place like this.'

'Yes,' she said, 'it's certainly a dull enough place.'

'You don't live here, I'm sure.'

'No, I'm glad to say I don't.'

'I thought not.' There was something delightfully flattering in the decisiveness of the deep voice. It was as if he had said: 'I was sure that no one so interesting, so charming, could live in such a dull place.'

'And you're a visitor too?' she asked.

'Yes, I'm simply here on business. But my business occupies only the mornings. For the rest of my time I'm thrown on my own resources, and I must say I find it desperately lonely. Why, until you kindly picked up my book just now I hadn't spoken to a soul, except in the way of business, since last Monday.'

She was touched by his confession. That this great, deep-voiced man should be lonely – a man one would have supposed self-sufficient, secure in his independence – awoke her sympathy, invested him, for her, with something of the pathetic helplessness of an overgrown child. After all, then, he was no stronger than she; less so, perhaps.

'Still,' she said – it was the only comfort, the only encouragement her

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correct, spinsterly mind could yet express – ‘still, I love the sea, even on days like this.’ She pointed to a pool of shimmering quicksilver far up the coast and paused to lean on the pier railing.

But he did not follow the direction of her glance. ‘I’d rather talk to you, to anyone, than look at the sea,’ he said.

She turned her head and found large grey eyes focussed on her. Her glance wavered and she looked out to sea again: a faint colour came to her thin cheeks. For those eyes had agitated her suddenly and overwhelmingly. She had never before seen in any eyes such a queer, disturbing concentration. They were not, she felt – as under pretence of watching the sea she struggled to regain her self-possession – they were not deliberately trying to fascinate her. No, there was something unconscious, almost unseeing, in their cold fixity that was almost terrifying. Her impulse was to have done with him, to finish off their encounter with a few polite commonplaces and hurry home to Miss Kittridge’s boarding-house. But she fought against it, forcibly reminding herself of those other moods that so often visited her now, those desperate moods in which she longed for some man she could sympathize with, like, perhaps love. If she took flight the moment the chance offered itself, she would certainly never escape from her horrible isolation. Besides, this man was lonely like herself. They were both, perhaps, caught in the same dead-end. But she must speak now, for by this prolonged silence, which he had not

attempted to break, she was allowing an undue intensity to creep into their relationship.

She moved suddenly, as if waking from a reverie. ‘It’s lovely,’ she said with a sigh.

‘What’s lovely?’ the deep voice asked quietly with its resonant burr.

‘The sea!’ She began to walk again, he at her side.

For a while neither spoke and it was he who broke the silence. ‘And what do you find to amuse yourself here?’

‘Oh,’ she said, ‘I read a good deal.’

‘What? Magazines? Novels?’

‘Not magazines; but, yes, novels, memoirs, poetry and so on.’

‘And then you have a walk on the pier?’

‘Yes, most afternoons.’

They had reached the pier gates and turned on to the Esplanade. There she stopped. ‘Well, I must be getting back to my . . . my rooms.’

‘You must go?’ The distress in his voice touched her again. Once again he was lonely, pathetic.

But she was firm. ‘Yes, I must go.’

‘Perhaps . . .’ He hesitated. ‘I hope we shall meet again. On the pier, perhaps, to-morrow afternoon.’

She smiled, bowed, and turned to cross the road. He raised his hat and stood there, large, solitary, sad, watching her go.

\* \* \*

In her bed in Miss Kittridge’s boarding-house, Charlotte Taunton heard St. Stephen’s clock strike one. For over two hours she had lain awake under the storm of thoughts and feelings



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that rose and sank and swirled in her anxious, spinster's mind. Repulsion, fascination, abject fear and desperate courage swung her alternately up and down like driftwood in a choppy sea. But under and above these fluctuating emotions an exhilaration, an intrcpid happiness buoyed her up. She did not try to sleep. She was content, thrillingly content, to escape from the narrow limits of her daily life. She was alive.

She slept at last, deeply, refreshingly, and awoke cool and level-headed. The emotional turmoil of the night, those mountains built out of a mere molehill, seemed to her now ridiculous. For what, she asked herself, was it all about? She had met a man, talked to him, and had been uncertain whether she liked him or not. He had asked her to meet him again. If she wished to, well, perhaps she would. If she preferred not to, she would simply have to avoid the pier. It was simple enough.

She got up and washed and dressed in her usual prim, methodical way. Then, as she turned to the bed to throw back the bedclothes (if you didn't, boarding-house servants never made your bed properly), she saw that drops were sliding down the window-pane. It was raining hard. A pang of disappointment shot through her, betraying in a flash the cool reasonableness of her waking mood.

It rained all morning, and all morning Charlotte sat with the other guests in the boarding-house sitting-room, an ordeal she avoided whenever possible. Gaunt old Miss Jackson and plump old Miss Macalister had, as usual, secured the comfortable

chairs on each side of the fire. Poor old Mr. Raglan had to be content with one of the smaller armchairs. Miss Jackson was crocheting yet another antimacassar in yellow string. As for Charlotte, she sat out of sight of the fire in a corner of the hard sofa, reading a book. A placid, desultory conversation, faded, superannuated, wove itself slowly into another antimacassar indistinguishable from Miss Jackson's except in being audible and not visible. Charlotte always in her boarding-houses kept herself carefully out of these conversations. She had an instinctive feeling that if once she allowed herself to be drawn into them it would be the end of hope, the end of individuality.

Old Mr. Raglan, his thin hands on the arms of his chair, turned himself feebly round. 'Even Miss Taunton has to stay indoors this morning,' he observed.

Charlotte pretended not to hear him. 'Oh, there's no use your talking to Miss Taunton,' said Miss Jackson archly, her eyes fixed on her antimacassar. 'She's miles away from us; miles away. I never knew such a student.'

'In the old dees in Scotland,' sang Miss Macalister in her mild Scotch accent, 'we never steed in for reen. Wet or fine, we were out and about.'

Old Mr. Raglan cleared his throat. 'I remember in Malta, and I'm speaking now of nearly fifty years ago. . . .'

'Oh, I don't mind rain: never did,' Miss Jackson broke in. 'At home, at Berkhamsted . . .'

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'In Scotland, of course, petee-  
cularly in the norrth west, Achna-  
sheen, Achnashellach, and those  
pleeces . . .'

'Dear me, yes, nearly fifty years  
ago, in Malta, as I was saying . . .'

'At Achnashellach, and in August  
too, when you'd expect . . .'

'Wet feet? At home, at Berk-  
hamsted, with a pair of good strong  
boots, sensible boots . . .'

'My dear Major, I said to him,  
my dear Major, I've been in Valetta  
now . . . let me see . . .'

'Yes, in Malta, I mean in Scot-  
land, in Eapril or airly Mee . . .'

'Valetta' . . . 'Achnasheen' . . .  
'Berkhamsted' . . . 'Malta' . . . 'Sen-  
sible boots' . . . 'In the old dees' . . .  
'Fifty years ago' . . . 'A hundred  
years ago.' Like amateur glee-singers,  
each clinging desperately to his own  
theme, resolutely deafening himself  
to the others, they wove their ceaseless  
counterpoint, their dusty antimacassar,  
that slowly, relentlessly wrapped itself  
like a cold, limp, suffocating shroud,  
about the silent Charlotte. She was  
not reading, only pretending to read.  
Once more, as the afternoon drew  
slowly nearer, her emotions were in a  
turmoil. She was urging herself, driv-  
ing herself, to take the plunge, to  
ignore all the timidities and fore-  
bodings of her old maid's nature and  
set off after lunch, rain or no rain, for  
the pier. After all, it didn't commit  
her to anything, especially since, as  
he had said, he was only here tem-  
porarily. Yes, she would force herself  
to go, whether she wanted to or not.  
Weren't these three hopelessly fos-  
silized old creatures chanting their  
separate songs together, a sufficient

warning to her to snatch at any pos-  
sibility of escape?

\* \* \*

It was raining still, a flying hori-  
zontal drizzle, when she emerged from  
the porch of Miss Kittridge's boarding-  
house. She hurried along the wet  
asphalt of the Esplanade, turned  
through the entrance gates of the pier  
and heard her footsteps grow suddenly  
loud on the hollow footway. Her  
feather boa was cold and wet against  
her face. Obviously he would not  
come in weather like this. Well, she  
felt now, it would be a relief if he  
didn't.

At that very moment he came out  
upon her from behind the deserted  
newspaper kiosk. 'Ah, so you came?'  
The deep voice with the burr in it  
was astonishingly familiar, as if she  
had known it for years. The grey eyes  
smiled at her kindly. She had not  
realized before that he was rather  
handsome.

'Yes,' she said, panting. 'Yes,  
I had to have a breath of fresh air.'

'Then it wasn't for me you came.'

The disappointment in his voice  
touched her, but her own voice was  
resolutely brisk. 'I hardly expected  
you in weather like this.'

They set off together down the  
empty pier. 'Weather?' he said.  
'What did the weather matter when  
there was a hope that. . . You see,  
I didn't want to miss the chance.'  
They walked on in silence and then  
he continued: 'Of course *you* have lots  
of friends and so you can hardly  
understand how much a little friendli-  
ness means to . . . well, to them that  
haven't. I live alone, you see.'

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'So do I,' she said. 'As it happens.'

'Indeed! Fancy, now. Fancy that. And you don't find it lonely?'

'Oh,' she said carelessly, 'one puts up with it.'

He sighed. 'Yes,' he said, 'yes, one has to'; and he went on to tell her of his circumstances, of his small flat in Brighton where it was so dull reading alone in the evenings, of his job as insurance agent and what he made out of it. 'It's enough, of course,' he said, 'so long as you're careful. But you, being comfortably off, won't know much about that.'

'Comfortably off?' She laughed. 'I only wish I were'; and by degrees she found herself, in turn, telling him something of her life and circumstances, of the £6,000 left her by her father. 'Do you call less than four pounds a week comfortably off?' she asked.

'Four pounds a week? Just over two hundred a year? You ought to get more than that out of your six thousand.'

It was so easy to talk to him; he was so human, so kind, so intelligent about the ordinary affairs of life. Of her own special hobbies, books and music, she soon found that, in any serious sense, he knew nothing. But what did that matter, when he had so many good qualities? When they had reached the end of the pier they took refuge in one of the shelters that faced away from the wind and rain. There they talked and talked. He smoked a cigarette, and when he had finished it he flung it out into the rain. It fell on the wet planking, and then the wind caught it and it began to roll. It gained speed. On and on it scurried

with absurd persistence, shedding little showers of sparks like a tiny squib. They watched it, amused, charmed, absorbed in its surprising adventures, till a stronger gust spoilt the game and swept it over the pier edge. That seemed a sign for them to rise and go, and when they did so, Charlotte found that the ridiculous little incident had drawn them together, turned them in a few moments into old friends.

When they parted, he fumbled in his coat pocket and brought out a parcel which he handed to her. 'I brought you a small present,' he said, 'just a trifle, a little thank-offering.'

She took it, her cheeks flushing faintly 'A thank-offering?'

'For your friendliness yesterday to a lonely man.'

It was a book, apparently; and, sure enough, when she unfastened it in her bedroom, it *was* a book, a little volume bound in red leather: *Poems of Passion* by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. She opened it. On the flyleaf was written: 'From Herbert Wilkins. A thank-offering for March 3rd.' Poor fellow! She was deeply touched. And somehow his lamentable, utterly inappropriate choice made his gift the more touching. She turned over the pages. What ludicrously bad stuff it was! Then she shut the book and put it away in a drawer.

\* \* \*

After that, events caught her up and whirled her off her feet. Next afternoon, though they had made no appointment, they both went to the pier. At first it seemed that they had lost something of their friendship: a strange inarticulateness had come

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between them. It was dull, but fine, and half-way up the pier they paused and leaned on the railing, and as on their first day Charlotte gazed at the sea. And suddenly, as before, she knew, felt, that his eyes were upon her. She turned her head. Once again that cold, unseeing stare enveloped her. Her heart began to flutter frantically. But in a moment his eyes warmed, recognized her. 'You're staring at that wretched sea again,' he said in mock reproof.

'Well,' she said, 'mayn't I look at the sea if I want to?'

'No,' he said, 'no, I can't allow it.'

They both laughed. The spell was broken; their friendship of yesterday was restored, more than restored.

When at last they walked back from the pavilion, just before they reached the gates, he told her point-blank that he was leaving Easthaven next morning.

She stood still, astonished, dismayed. 'Leaving? To-morrow?'

'Yes,' he said. 'Will you be sorry?'

She did not reply and he saw a flash of tears in her eyes. He laid his arm round her shoulders, drew her into the shadow of the kiosk, and put his lips to her cheek. She stood prim and stiff in his embrace, her white face averted. 'Won't you,' the deep, quiet voice burred in her ear, 'won't you give me one?'

She turned her face suddenly and kissed his lips. 'Must I go to-morrow,' he murmured, 'or will you tell me to stay?'

There was a long silence. 'Eh?' the quiet voice urged her.

She gave a deep sigh. 'Yes,' she said faintly, 'yes, yes, stay!'

Suddenly she broke from his arms and hurried out through the pier gates.

\* \* \*

A week later they were married and had moved, not to his flat—he wouldn't even show her his flat—but to comfortable lodgings in Brighton. That week, it seemed, had swept over her like a hurricane. Did she love him? She could not say. What did it mean, to love? All she knew was that she was supremely satisfied, that she was enthralled by his presence, that she regretted nothing. She had escaped from the dreary, stagnant life in which she had been imprisoned all these years, from her horrible isolation, from her cold, burdensome virginity. She had abandoned herself to him desperately and, at last, gladly. In the morning, when she woke early, she would raise herself on one elbow and gaze incredulously at the huge body with its warm animal smell, sleeping so close to her, reach out a timid hand and, braving her instinctive reluctance, touch his chest, his arm, quiveringly amazed that a few words spoken, a printed form with a few words scribbled into it, should make all this permissible and irreproachable, that it should be merely normal that he should stand half naked before her, shaving himself in the mirror, while she, if she wished, might lie and idly watch the lift of the great shoulders and the delicate flow of the muscles under the soft, pearly flesh of his back as he raised his arm. Magic could hardly do more than that brief, casual ceremony which not only reversed half the moral sanctions of life,

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but stripped it of almost all its sacred modesties and privacies and thrust suddenly upon it the hot, acutely disturbing proximities of a cage at the Zoo. It was as violent and thrilling as a revolution. But a revolution is a temporary thing, a means to an end far different. A revolution that continued for a lifetime would be maddening. What, then, eventually happened in marriage? Would she find, later on, that there were respites, would she in the end be able to rescue a few rags at least of private identity? Or would she soon become so changed that all these things would seem natural to her? She shuddered.

The days that followed brought new discoveries. Herbert, though generally good tempered and affectionate, was, it appeared, subject to moods. Sometimes when he came in from work he was taciturn and a little surly. Sometimes, when their supper had been cleared, he would sit with his elbow on the table, his chin on his fist, staring, staring at the fire or the window, his lower lip drawn in as if he were baffled or worried, and in his eyes that strange, cold fixity which she had twice seen at Easthaven. When she spoke, asking him what was the matter, he didn't reply, hadn't, apparently, so much as heard her. At first she was worried, alarmed. Then, finding that after half an hour or so he would shake the mood off and become his old, friendly self again, she gave up worrying and would take up a book and read placidly before the fire until he stirred or spoke.

She had written to her brother. 'You may be surprised to hear that I am married. I had got rather tired

of the name Taunton and so changed it to Wilkins.' Yes, William would no doubt be a little surprised, but as they seldom corresponded and never met nowadays he would soon get over it. Her husband now urged her to write again to William saying that it would now be proper for her to have her money in her own hands. She entirely agreed with him and they concocted the letter together. Two days later came William's reply.

Dear Charlotte,

It is not in my power to hand your money over to you; in fact, as you know well enough though you seem to have forgotten it, the capital does not belong to you. The £6,000 was left in trust. You enjoy the interest during your lifetime and at your death the capital passes to me or, if I predecease you, to my children.

She handed the letter to Herbert over the breakfast-table. It was annoying, but it did not seem to be a very serious matter, and she was aghast when, having read it, he broke into a fury. 'But it's impossible. You mean to tell me the money's not yours, that all this time you've been leading me to suppose . . .'

'But we have the income, Herbert.'

'The income!' He snorted contemptuously. 'You told me quite definitely. . . . You've no idea what this means. And you knew it all the time.'

She was utterly dismayed. 'I didn't. Really I didn't, Herbert.'

He tapped the letter furiously with his fingers. 'But he tells you you

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did. "As you know well enough"; read it for yourself.' He flung the letter back at her. Ten minutes later he had gone off on his rounds.

He never mentioned the subject again, but from that day his manner changed completely. He was cold and irritable and she was almost relieved when he announced, one evening, that he was going away for a few days on business. They had been married just a fortnight.

\* \* \*

After a week's absence he wrote curtly, telling her that his firm had ordered him to Canada on urgent business. Not a word of the length of his absence, the date of his return. Staring, cold and dry-eyed, at his note, she read in it, oh much more clearly than its actual phrases, the fact that he was gone from her for ever. But though secretly convinced, she rejected it and waited week after week for some sign from him which she knew only too well would never come. It was the sudden change in him, his cynical abandonment of all pretence of affection as soon as he had learnt about her money, that especially wounded her, revealing, as it did, the falsity of all that had gone before. He had simply been practising on her, then, from the first. The thought of it plunged her in shame and humiliation. And he had dealt her a second wound, the abrupt, violent amputation of their life together. His physical presence, so thrillingly, inescapably close, had been abolished with ruthless suddenness, emptying her life of all its new, enthralling significance. After waiting a month she gave up the

sitting-room and double bedroom and took a small single room in the same house, saying that her husband was delayed by business and that his return was still uncertain.

Weeks passed, and months and gradually, like the widening circumferences of a stone's impact on still water, the force of the blow she had received spent itself. She had dropped back automatically into her old solitary life. Yet it was not the same now as formerly; for she had discovered with a deep secret satisfaction that she was no longer insulated. Through him, through Herbert, she had tapped the warm current of life, and that current flowed through her still. She had escaped from her old self. And she found now that she was not inconsolable, not desolate, far less desolate, in fact, than she had been before his coming. He was gone, sunk into a past much deeper, it seemed to her, than a mere eight months; and now that the blaze of physical discovery which had branded him on her senses had died down, she could examine their brief life together dispassionately. She could admit to herself now that there had always been much in him — things that hitherto she had forced herself to ignore — that had offended her; vulgarities of speech, coarsenesses of mind and behaviour, his too obvious lack of education, and other, more intimate things than that. She had liked him and pitied him; he had exercised a physical fascination upon her, and for that, even now, she felt immensely grateful to him. Yes, she felt for him a physical gratitude; a strange expression, but how profoundly true! But she had

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never loved him. That she now clearly realized. And what had he felt for her? Had he ever really cared for her at all? She recalled their early confidences on the pier at Easthaven. Was it simply her money that he was after? Nothing else at all? Well, what did it matter now? She smiled grimly. Poor Herbert, he hadn't got much out of her. Whereas out of him she had got incalculable things; release – release from her old starved life, release from self. Yes, she had got from him reality, fulfilment, a tremendous experience, a profound satisfaction, and memories, crowded into less than a month, that would feed her for a lifetime.

In the early spring, almost exactly a year after their wedding, she left Brighton and moved to Lyme Regis. The place charmed her. Since her marriage, her restlessness, her desire to be for ever on the move, had left her. She thought of settling down. If she could find a tiny flat here, or pleasant, inexpensive rooms, she would establish herself, she thought, in this friendly little town. But there was no hurry: she was in comfortable lodgings: she could wait for months, for a year, till she found exactly what she wanted. And so the months passed, the holiday season came and went, and Charlotte read her books, took walks along the coast, sat on the Cob, where Jane Austen's Louisa sprained her ankle, noted in her daily paper the parliamentary debates, the behaviour of foreign nations, or followed, fascinated and shocked, the trial of the murderer Heppell who had married and disposed of four wives. In November she discovered at last the very

rooms she wanted, overlooking her beloved sea. They would be free in ten days.

And then a strange fancy came to her. She would pay another visit to Easthaven, just a day or two, before settling down. She could not disentangle the impulses that prompted her. Was it that she wished to walk the pier once more and savour to the full her new security, her escape from the old devouring hopes and longings, her perfect recovery from Herbert's callous desertion? Or was it that she sought to add an extra relish to the pleasant life on which she was embarking by contrasting it, not merely in memory but actually, with the bleak months in Miss Kittridge's boarding-house? Perhaps it was all these things together that drew her.

She wrote to Miss Kittridge under her maiden name – the inquiries provoked by the new one would have been tiresome – and engaged a room. She reached Easthaven in the early afternoon and having deposited her luggage at the boarding-house, went out. There was the pier, damp and deserted as usual, there was the newspaper kiosk, closed as it always was in the dead season. But Herbert was not there. She could not call up even the faintest ghost of him. Perhaps the Herbert of their brief days of marriage, the Herbert she had lived with and slept with, the Herbert who had changed so suddenly into the harsh, callous creature who had abandoned her, overshadowed too heavily that kindly, pathetic ghost.

She walked to the end of the pier and back, calm, secure, contented. On her way home a newsboy trotted

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past her crying the evening paper. 'Heppell. Execution of Heppell!' he shouted. She called him, got out a penny. 'Anged 'im this morning, Miss,' said the boy brightly as he handed her the paper. Her eye caught a portrait of a man in a bowler hat: John Heppell. She frowned, raised it closer to her eyes. It was the portrait of her husband.

She hurried back to the boarding-house, up to her room. There, having locked the door, she studied the portrait once again. No, there could be no possible mistake. For an hour she sat in the fireless bedroom. She did not think, nor did she feel anything except that she was very cold. Then she rose to her feet, pressed her hands for a moment over her eyes, and having tidied her hair in the mirror, went downstairs.

And when she opened the sitting-room door, there they were, gaunt Miss Jackson with her half-finished antimacassar and plump Miss Macalister, on either side of the fire. 'In Scotland in the old dees,' Miss Macalister was saying, 'at Achnashellach . . .' Only Mr. Raglan was missing. Simultaneously they raised their heads. 'Why, it's Miss Taunton. What a

surprise!' She stood gazing at them and at the sight of them a sudden, overwhelming disgust swept over her, disgust not at the poor old creatures themselves, but at the barrenness, the torpor, the utter negation of life which they symbolized. 'You've heard, of course,' said Miss Jackson, 'that Mr. Raglan's dead. Died in this very room.'

'You'll be eeble to have his cheer now,' said Miss Macalister hospitably. 'And what have you been doing with yerself, Miss Taunton? Making your usual round?'

A sudden mad impulse seized her to rouse them, galvanize them into some semblance of life. 'No,' she said, still standing by the door; 'I've given that up. I've got married.'

'Married?' Their flat voices soared together.

'Yes, to Heppell, the murderer.'

She turned suddenly to leave them, appalled at her insane betrayal of herself. But her secret was secure enough, and before she had opened the door their pale, piping laughter had assured her of it. 'My dear Miss Taunton,' fluted Miss Jackson, 'what *will* you say next?'



# Public Libraries and Fiction: A Correspondence

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DEAR SIR,

Since you give me 'challenge for challenge' I assume you wish me to reply. If this discussion can assist your readers to understand more clearly the attitude of the public librarian towards fiction it will be justified.

You say that you 'naturally assumed that it was not considered to be within the province of a Public Librarian to distinguish between good and bad fiction.' In that case I fear you have erred at the outset. Public Librarians have always endeavoured to discriminate between the good and the bad from the viewpoint of literary merit and intellectual content. They have always tried to ensure that the public should have access to the good. The only grounds upon which they may hesitate are those of 'morals,' as they occasionally find it difficult to decide what is acceptable to the public and what is not. In such cases it is difficult to avoid giving offence to someone, and rightly they do not regard themselves as judges of current moral standards.

The main point, however, is that most public librarians have never taken the provision of fiction (apart from 'good' fiction) quite as seriously as so many of their critics assume. We pay far more attention to our other functions – such as the provision of books for students and for the general body of intelligent non-fiction readers, the maintenance of well-stocked, efficiently-staffed reference collections, and the literary education of children. That is why I referred to the amount spent on current fiction. Actually

we spend so little on new novels that no reader who was solely interested in current fiction 'for diversion purposes' would come to the public library if he could afford to use any other source of supply. My own library does not spend 3 per cent. of its book fund on current fiction. The average expenditure on fiction of all kinds, including much of undoubted literary value, is seldom as much as 25 per cent. of the total book fund.

You will perhaps ask how this statement agrees with the percentage of fiction issues which in many libraries form from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of the total. The answer is simple. We can buy twenty novels (ex-circulating library copies, and cheap editions) for the price of, say, Ogg's *England in the reign of Charles II*; the novels are read and returned in three or four days, but the larger and more serious book may be kept as many weeks. Perhaps this is but another example of the fallibility of statistics.

In short, your readers need not fear that the modern public librarian wishes to circulate large quantities of cheap and nasty fiction. He prefers to render services which cannot be rendered by other agencies, though he cannot forget the claims of the poorer sections of the community he serves. If librarians in the past have over-emphasized the size of their issues it is because they have had to fight against the opposition of those who did not understand the value of a good public library. It is a pity they had to. Maybe one effect of this correspondence will be to stimulate the active

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support of intelligent people, such as your readers, who, instead of misunderstanding the functions of public libraries, will use their influence to secure better financial support for their genuine aims. One of these is the promotion of English literature. It is for that reason that I must denounce any rigid 'no fiction less than ten-years-old' rule. There is much current fiction which deserves a place in public libraries.

One final point:—You ask whether I 'think the officials of public libraries should deny the right of "laymen" to criticize their administration.' I am sorry to have to say so, but that is a silly remark. We welcome criticism. The more the better. It is evidence of interest. What I resented was criticism based upon 'ignorance and prejudice.' Personally I dislike ignorant and prejudiced criticism about *anything*. Don't you?

Yours faithfully,

LIONEL R. MCCOLVIN,  
Hon. Secretary,  
Library Association.

Gulson (Central) Library,  
Coventry.

DEAR SIR,

I was interested to read your remarks upon this subject, and Mr. McColvin's letter, with your comments, in the November and December numbers of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, and venture to submit the considered (though quite unofficial) views of another public librarian.

The total *home reading* issues from these Libraries for the twelve months ended March 31st, 1934, were 1,008,617, of which 393,146 (39 per cent.) were represented by novels borrowed by adult readers. As to the percentage of the book fund spent by public (municipal) libraries upon current fiction, there need be no secrecy about this: the national average is some 30 per cent.

When commenting upon the fiction

issues of public libraries, three considerations should be borne in mind. In the first place, novels are read much more quickly than most other kinds of books, and the 'fiction turnover' naturally reflects this fact. Secondly, comparison between the reading of fiction and of non-fiction, with an implied deprecation of the former, is to a large extent fallacious—for this reason: in classified issue statistics the novels of H. G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, Charles Morgan, Aldous Huxley, and other writers of a comparable literary standing, count as mere 'fiction'; while books on palmistry, how to do puzzles, etc. (not to speak of the flood of ephemeral scissors-and-paste 'biographies' and mildly scandalous 'memoirs' which have no more value than 'light' novels) are dignified as 'non-fiction.' Thirdly, novel reading is not a habit confined to a particular section of the public—certainly not to a minority, as you suggest. Most of us read both novels *and* other books. And has not Mr. Guedalla (I quote from memory) described detective story reading as 'a sport of noble minds'? Moreover, in practically every instance of which I am aware, when there is an increase in a library's fiction issues there is a parallel increase in the circulation of other classes of books.

You will agree, Sir, that much important contemporary thought is presented in fictional shape (the novel being a characteristic literary form of this age, as sermons, and essays, were those of earlier periods). I maintain, therefore, that, *provided a legitimate standard is maintained*, the provision of contemporary novels by public libraries is unquestionably justified: failure to provide them would be to neglect a proper cultural function. (And I would submit that a library whose total issues show a high proportion of 'fiction' *may* be performing as valuable, or even more valuable, a public service as another library whose issue statistics show a

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much lower 'fiction percentage.' It all depends upon the *quality* of the books circulated, be they novels or non-fiction).

Not all librarians, fortunately, are 'obsessed with issue figures' (which at best can be regarded as only a very partial and inadequate index to the real value of their work). And for what obsession does exist, not librarians, but library committees – which, like other municipal committees, are becoming haggard with the contemporary craving for statistics, which will compare well with those of other authorities – must be held chiefly responsible.

As you will have gathered, I emphatically disagree with your suggestion that we should exclude from our shelves all novels less than ten years old. (What special virtue will Mr. Huxley's *Brave New World*, for example, gain in ten years – except to become, like your own attitude, a little out of date? Why not, with equal unreason, extend your ban over twenty, fifty, or any other number of years?) You may be assured, by the way, that this policy would find little favour with the majority of ratepayers. The *majority* of those who pay the piper with the public money spent upon libraries – so exiguous a sum in relation to the expenditure upon other social services – would, I am afraid, incline to call the tune of even more current, and 'lighter,' fiction! In point of fact, however, regular borrowers from municipal libraries – admittedly *not yet* the majority of the population – are those who want books other than, or additional to, those provided by the commercial circulating libraries, whose only standard in selection is that of an ephemeral popular demand.

The 'provision by the majority for a minority' argument, supported by what you must know to be fallacious analogies, is unworthy of a responsible literary journal, and in any case will not hold

water. (Were this argument a sound one, it would rule out publicly maintained institutions for orphans, and the blind – not to speak of the mental asylums, which, as yet, are tenanted by a minority of the population.) Most cultural institutions and activities are, indeed, *taken direct advantage of* by comparative minorities, but it is of the essence of democracy that they should be *provided by* the community as a whole – in the faith that all will profit by them, if only indirectly. Moreover, the percentage of public library borrowers to population has greatly increased in recent years. Statistics of book issues definitely prove that these millions of new readers by no means confine their borrowing to novels. (Incidentally, rate-provided orchestras, which perform 'popular' as well as 'classical' music, can be heard free of charge at holiday resorts. Municipally maintained theatres and opera houses are not unknown on the Continent, and have their advocates in this country. Would you argue that no 'popular' works should be produced by such institutions – until they were ten years old?)

Your surely somewhat narrow-minded and ungenerous proposition that 'libraries are rate-supported in order to make available to those who cannot afford to buy them, accepted works of literature, technical and semi-technical books and books of reference' sounds like an echo from the 1850's, and suggests a curious ignorance of contemporary conditions, social and cultural, particularly in our industrial cities. As a truer, and more liberal, description of the function of public libraries to-day, I would submit the following: to cater for healthy mental recreation (*re-creation*), to supply 'the indispensable material of the knowledge and thought without which no nation can prosper,' and to provide for that enlargement of the spirit which can so richly be derived from great literature – viz., re-

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creation, information, culture (in ascending order of value).

With regard to the censorship of fiction: I incline to agree with you that for the library authority which feels itself incompetent to exercise a reasonable discrimination in its book selection, the simplest way to solve the difficulty is not to buy any current novels at all. It would thus preserve the purity of its shelves from the contamination of discussions of contemporary problems and 'subversive' (magic word!) new ideas – at the cost of alienating its more intelligent patrons and making itself generally ridiculous. I believe, however, that an inspection of the fiction shelves in very many of our public libraries would convince you that there *are* librarians and library committees sufficiently intelligent and free from irrational and irrelevant prejudice to be able to select novels according to their *literary* qualities, and who, not being mentally and morally crippled by infantile fixations, feel no necessity to rationalize their unfortunate inhibitions as a spinsterlike solicitude for the young and weaker brethren (who in any case will remain unprotected from Sunday papers and the fare provided by the 'twopenny libraries').

Is it too much to hope for, Sir, that a little further consideration, based, not upon unfortunate isolated examples, but upon the work and administration of public libraries in this country as a whole, will lead you to some modification of your, at present, rather old-fashioned and not very enlightened views?

Yours faithfully,

E. AUSTIN HINTON,  
City Librarian.

Literary and Philosophical Society,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

DEAR SIR,

The Westminster Public Library report has started an extraordinary num-

ber of hares. With Mr. Lambert in the van, flourishing a copy of the *Listener*, Sir John Squire puffing along at his heels (waving a review copy of a mouse-trap) and the Editor of LIFE AND LETTERS coming up in the rear (accompanied by a huske of letters from *The Times*), the field is an exciting one, with, I think, odds on the last. LIFE AND LETTERS, one assumes from the name, is concerned with life and letters, with the impingement of the latter on the former; from there it is a step to an active interest in the reading habit and a shorter one to a consideration of the relationship between the public libraries and the 5½ millions of our fellow-countrymen who are registered as borrowers. That is to say, comment and criticism from laymen who are concerned with human values and not with the mechanics of public library administration is, in my opinion, not only legitimate but altogether desirable. For that reason I was glad to come across in the November issue of LIFE AND LETTERS the criticism to which the Secretary of the Library Association has taken exception. I not only read it, but copied it, and added it to the material I am collecting for a more exhaustive study some day. Mr. McCollvin's attitude is not altogether surprising: it is a sincere utterance derived from an attitude and tradition with sixty-five years' sanction and approval behind it. He wrote in the name of the Library Association, of which he is Secretary. Actually he expressed the opinions of the individual he distinctively is, and with whom I have no quarrel. But his letter was couched in a tone which may suggest that he represents all who are engaged in exploiting books for the gain of society.

This is not so. There is unmistakably a growing concern among public librarians about the function of the public library and the genuine place it occupies in the scheme of things. That this concern

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amounts to dissatisfaction I shall hope to demonstrate later.

In the meantime, let me return to the 'sixty-five years' I mentioned a few sentences ago. Sixty-five years ago it was 1870. And 1870 was the date of the passing into law of the Elementary Education Act. A study of the debates in Parliament during the readings of the Bill, of the utterances of the Birmingham League and other supporters, reveals here and there a confidence in the effects of the Bill which makes curious reading in the light of contemporary trends and phenomena. They all boiled down to this attitude: that if only the masses could be taught to read, what a terrific stride forward humanity would take. It didn't matter very much, for the moment, exactly what they would read. pornographic books are illegal, so are blasphemous books (and now a whole literature of 'disaffection'). The thing was to create a nation of readers. They would be able to commune with the sages of all ages, would grow wiser and be able to vote intelligently, would be able to grapple more confidently with the problems of adjustment to the obligations of Progress. Perhaps the views of John Stuart Mill's father may be taken as typical of the idealistic forecasts of the effects of compulsory education. Mill says in his *Autobiography*, 'So complete was my father's reliance on the influence of reason over the mind of mankind, whenever it is allowed to reach them, that he felt all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing, and if, by means of the suffrage, they could nominate a legislation to give effect to the opinions they adopted.'

It is tempting to follow this quotation with any of a hundred extracts from the *Daily Express*, but instead let me quote Lord Eustace Percy, former Minister of Education: 'Our purpose is not to create

or stimulate the reading habit. Nearly everyone in this country already has it and has it very badly. It has been discovered that the greatest 'mind opiate' in the world is carrying the eye along a certain number of printed lines in succession. . . . The habit of reading is one of the most interesting psychological features of the present day. Discomfort and exhaustion seem only to increase the need for the printed word. A friend, in describing the advance of one of the columns in East Africa during the war, has remarked how his men, sitting drenched and almost without food round the camp fire, would pass from hand to hand a scrap of a magazine cover, in order that each man might rest his eyes for a moment on the printed word.<sup>1</sup> One of the great evils of present-day reading is that it discourages thought.'

And there you have it in a nutshell. Theory and practice. If you have twelve-and-six, you go out and buy it in a bottle: if you are on the Means Test you get it for nothing in the Public Library.

But before I go any further, I want to clear up any misapprehensions which may arise from the last few paragraphs. Take the last one. I don't dislike whisky; on the contrary. Nor do I dislike P. G. Wodehouse, Mark Spade or even F. R. Leavis. Each is light and entertaining in his own way. My simple contention is that there is a time and place for everything: that there is a time and place for 'diversion-reading': that the time is not all the time, and that the place is not the public library.

Nor am I suggesting that it is a pity the Elementary Education Act was ever passed. Sometimes when I am home in Shetland and potter blankly happy about

<sup>1</sup> Magazine covers being favourite sites for artificial silk stocking advertisements, this should not perhaps be taken too seriously. But this does not affect the truth of Lord Percy's general assertion.

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the croft a rare doubt sneaks in. But in less sentimental moods, I do see the nobility of the original concept, and do recognize the golden fruits which shine bright against the background of the rotten.

In 1924, Sir Charles Trevelyan, then President of the Board of Education, appointed a Departmental Committee 'to inquire into the adequacy of the library provision already made under the Public Libraries Acts . . . regard being had to the relation of the libraries conducted under these Acts to other public libraries *and to the general system of national education*' (*my italics*). This Committee, which presented its Report in 1927 (Cmd. 2868), accomplished a great deal of extremely and permanently valuable work. But the phrase I have italicized above appears to me to have been overlooked or, if not overlooked, related to a conception of education as an activity external to the public library and not an intrinsic part of it, as it clearly is. Table XXIV of the Committee's Report summarizes the statistics for issues during 1924 (the particular year under review) of urban public libraries.<sup>1</sup> They are: non-fiction 22 per cent.; fiction 78 per cent. These figures do not refer to libraries with small leisured populations or to libraries serving large industrial populations, but are representative of all classes of urban public libraries.

This fact, it seems to me, is a chiel that simply winna ding. Four out of five books issued by the public libraries ten years ago (the growth of unemployment since has probably increased the percentage) were for novels. I find it impos-

sible to reconcile this state of affairs with the ideals and motives of (1) the promoters of the 1870 Elementary Education Act, and (2) the promoters of the early Public Libraries Acts. Might not an independent observer be forgiven if he said that the majority of those administering our public libraries to-day are guilty of a plain abuse of trusteeship, not necessarily deliberate, but nevertheless apparent?

I know, as we all know, that not all novels constitute 'diversion-reading.' A conscientious attack on Henry James, or even, from a sense of duty, on certain of Scott's novels, is sufficient to prove this. In a more pleasant sense, it is not a diversion to read Huxley's *Brave New World* but a stimulating mental experience modified by one's prejudices for or against behaviourist psychology. But I also know my public library fiction-gobblers. I know the atrocious slush which circulated most hectically and was most greedily grabbed by the New-Drug fiends as it was placed on the return ledge. I remember several species of the genus fiction-gobbler: the harassed matron with her string bag looking in during her shopping rounds for something soothing to read between dinner-time and school-closing time, the listless unemployed youth craving for vicarious excitement, the boy-friendless shop-girl, the clerk in a rut, the old maid; and all the other square pegs in round holes. If I were asked to summarize the fundamental function of the contemporary public library's fiction section, I might describe it as an ever-failing attempt to fill with shoddy putty the crevices between square pegs and their round sockets.

Neurasthenic ailments, it is well known, have become alarmingly common in the last twenty years, and the palliative effects of literary flapdoodle have become increasingly recognized. One may, in fact, buy one's aspirin at one counter in the chemist's and select one's novel at the next. How far it is the public library's

<sup>1</sup> In 1933, H.M.S.O. issued *Statistics of Urban Public Libraries in England and Wales* (1931-32), to bring up-to-date the figures last published in the 1927 Report. The Preface states: 'It was thought desirable . . . that these figures should be summarized, as far as possible, in tables comparable to those compiled in the Report of 1927.' Statistics of fiction and non-fiction issues were omitted from this. It is interesting to speculate why.

## Public Libraries and Fiction

social duty to provide literary aspirins to those who desperately need them is an enormously difficult question, and I cannot conscientiously tackle it in this limited space. The unemployed man, for example, constitutes a special problem, and any withdrawal of the free beer he now gets at the public library would, under present circumstances, be a cruel and anti-social act.

But what of the others? The millions in a rut?

It may be said that only a proportion of novels in public libraries are third-rate, that out of the 78 per cent. fiction issues, as much as 50 per cent. refer to novels by writers with reputations as extensive and acknowledged as those of Gilbert Frankau, Warwick Deeping, Edgar Wallace, Sabatini, Maud Diver, P. C. Wren, and so on. This argument, I must say, seems to me to be entirely beside the point. In the first place the writer's motive is purely to divert: and I object on principle to the encouragement of the theory behind 'fun-fairs' and leg-shows in a public library. [A time and place for everything for everybody: maxim for humane dictator.] In the second place, it is a question of literary perception. What are these writers trying to say? P. C. Wren is simply trying to tell a rousing tale to entertain his readers. If there were a formed or sympathetic intellect behind it all, it wouldn't be so bad. But what is the quality of the mind reflecting its prejudices in the book, what is the nature of those prejudices, and finally what is their suggestive power on the mob which absorbs them?

But one does not want to belabour too much the fact that in many contemporary novels, the critically unaware reader is exposed to contact with shoddy minds which have acquired a writing trick. The overwhelming objection to the 'diversion-novel' is the fact that it provides the reader with a ready-made escape from

life or, as Mrs. Leavis puts it, enables him 'to live at the novelist's expense.' Already, I suppose, the theory is an old one, but it is none the less true for its antiquity. Speaking in singular terms of 'the novel' and 'the reader,' the 'escape from life' criticism sounds perhaps a little abstract. But if I point out that in 1932 over 164 million books were issued from public libraries in England and Wales, and remind you of that 78 per cent. fiction issue, the magnitude of the 'escape-racket' becomes increasingly apparent, indicating as it does a social problem of first-class dimensions, meriting the serious attention of public librarians, the laymen on the councils and committees who direct policy, and the laymen who pay for it all.

I said earlier that here and there in the ranks of the public librarians, a voice is heard urging the necessity for an entirely new re-definition of function. With a few distinguished exceptions, the voices belong mainly to the young who are more sensitively aware of their own generation's problems. Let me quote Mr. Hilton Smith, Deputy Librarian, Hendon: 'We still lack a definite theory of librarianship which would help towards a sensible solution of such problems as the relationship of the library to the whole vast entertainment industry and to the services parallel with our own, which provide means for the creative enjoyment of leisure. . . . The wholesale reconsideration of function that has been provoked, indeed necessitated by the crisis may prove to be, in the long run, the seed of good in a welter of apparent evil. Now is the time to plan a policy: to seize, whenever possible, to create, opportunities for implementing it; and to abandon for good and all the haphazard expansion of former days.'<sup>1</sup>

At the Library Association Conference in London in September, 1934, two of the

<sup>1</sup> Address to American Library Association, Montreal, June, 1934.

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older men had something constructive to say on the subject. Mr. J. D. Stewart, Librarian of Bermondsey, dwelt on the striking development of the 'Tuppenny Library' movement 'catering directly for the people who require not any books in particular, but merely something exciting to read – the people who like their daily dose of imaginative dope.' That Mr. Stewart was well aware of the fact that hordes of the latter now find gratification in the public libraries is clear from his later admission. 'The ultimate effect of these libraries, if they continue to develop, upon the purely recreational side of public library work, offers an interesting field for speculation. Personally, I welcome them, and hope that in time they will relieve us of some work with which we can well afford to dispense, and free more of our energies for the work that no commercial circulating library can ever do.'

I, too, welcome the tuppenny libraries, largely because their part-usurpation of the function of supplying paper aspirin, at the moment medico-socially indispensable, has precipitated a fresh decision on the true function of the public library. The situation was admirably condensed by an ex-public librarian, speaking his mind to colleagues still in harness. Mr. L. S. Jast, ex-City Librarian of Manchester, said: 'The urge to amuse by means of books which was rightly felt by the public libraries in the past, a stage which the county libraries are not yet out of, has no longer the justification that it had – the same justification, for the library can never properly ignore its recreative side. The urge for readers must be nearly glutted. And the lust for statistics must be nearly satiated. All of which suggests that the time is seasonable for a survey of the position, and an attempt to re-define, in terms of present needs, the aims and public of the urban rate-supported library.'

So much for theory. What of practice? Only one public library in the

kingdom has so far been bold enough to experiment with a revised concept of its function. Mr. T. E. Callander, Librarian of Finchley Public Library, describes in the *Library Association Record* (November, 1934) his experiment at Finchley.

At Finchley, it was decided from the beginning (the library was opened in 1933) 'that no attempt should be made to cater for those readers who might demand only fiction of a trivial kind, but that the fiction provided should as far as possible be of a type having some cultural significance.'

'Thrillers of the Sapper, Horler, Oppenheim, Le Queux type were entirely excluded. Concessions were made in the case of authors like Buchan where it was felt that definite literary merit was present. . . . Dell, Diver, Sutherland, Ayres, Pedler, Petersen and the rest of the great company of sob sisters were not bought. . . . Edgar Wallace was allowed to rest in his grave, but P. G. Wodehouse was bought with enthusiasm. On the positive side, middlebrow authors, particularly Galsworthy, Walpole and Mary Webb, were heavily duplicated.

The fiction issue at Finchley is 62 per cent., and, bearing in mind the quality of the stock, it seems to me to be relatively satisfactory. The librarian is content with describing the experiment and does not offer his experience as a proof of the success or failure of the policy. But the observer will, I think, concede that it is at least a step in the right direction.

The difficulties of practising a revised definition of function are very great. The lack of reliable charts in the oceans of new books is a serious obstacle for the librarian, once he has formulated his new definition. But it is not my purpose here to suggest remedies or new definitions: my aim has been to state the case.

Yours truly,

M. C. POTTINGER,  
*Librarian.*



## Reviews

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SPENSER'S FAERIE QUEENE' AN INTERPRETATION. By JANET SPENS. Arnold. 8s. 6d.

IT is true, as Miss Spens says, and quite natural, that Spenser is a poet more theoretically admired than read. Reading him for the first time must be, to many students, like half waking up into a dream, to hear a strange voice talking on and on about people whom they do not know, whose ways of life are so fantastic and remote as to be nothing but boring; but if the reader is lucky, after a time he finds that he loves the voice. If not, the best thing that can happen is for him to fall asleep again and dream of something else. Miss Spens says that her book is an attempt 'to give back to English readers the understanding of and delight in this great poet that thrilled his contemporaries'; and she speaks of the number of critical works on Spenser that have been published lately in America. But it is doubtful whether the most illuminating criticism can bring more people to enjoy a poet so personal, in whom the voice counts for so much, the constant atmosphere, the immanence in the words of the living person. Understanding the criticism may give, where delight already is; but delight I do not think it can give; and without the initial delight in the voice (something much less intellectual than appreciation of style) no one could understand Spenser in any profitable sense – it would be a heroic labour to read his poems through.

But perhaps the American criticism, and Miss Spens' own book, are signs of the times, and the times are favourable for a return of Spenser to as much popu-

larity as poets can enjoy. Fashions in literature are not always a contemptible matter of sheep following a leader. They can be more like the spontaneous, telepathic movements of flocks of birds; and there is something in Spenser's poetry, in his way of seeing and the cast of his mind, that many people might respond to at the present time. His world is exceedingly conventional, but within the convention, once you can breathe in it, you find that his characters are nakedly engaged in living. Miss Spens herself notices in modern dramatic production 'a subconscious instinct that the dramatic form is inadequate. Producers attempt to show by effects of lighting and by symbolic staging the universal pattern on which the web of a particular story is woven'. Similarly, to many of this generation, the reality of experience is expressed more closely in dancing or miming, where it is seen through one set of symbols only, than through the multitudinous symbols of realism, reflecting a reflection. And the affinity is deeper: for it seems that people are more generally interested now in the internal form of their life than in the external – careers, public service, bringing up families (considered as families), supporting with dignity a recognized position in a community. There must be a great many reasons; the most obvious is the breakdown of employment, and of the social structure of life altogether. It is quite strange now to meet a young man who is straightforwardly ambitious, who thinks of his occupation as a career, and a career as his life's business. Perhaps it was always so, and it is now only not the

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fashion – except in the advertisements of firms requiring commercial travellers – to talk as if the impression a person makes in the world were important; but how people talk, though it may be a crude sign, is still a sign. In the same way, Spenser's knights, though one could say that they had careers of a kind, and though they live in a world full of distractions, are occupied with a wholly personal and internal quest – anyone who had never heard the word 'allegory' would recognize that. Whatever they are doing it is never anything settled or sensible. They live in a curious freedom: the end purpose of their lives may lead them off at any moment into the most disconnected adventures, and they never know in the morning where they will spend the night. Even the shapeless landscape of their world, which it is unthinkable should ever be mapped, is a landscape of the mind's life. It is impossible to convey the strangeness and familiarity of this country –

*So exceeding spacious and wyde,  
And sprinkled with such sweet variety –*

that sustains the story: the sense of distance in it, as in the background of an Italian picture, the little woods that turn to forests, the paths through forests becoming trodden highways, the hovels or the huge castles that the traveller comes to without surprise at the end of a day, the sun so present as it rises and sets, and the people the traveller meets, friends or enemies, not neutral bodies like those we pass in the underground: it is a country in which many people living now might feel immediately at home.

It is difficult to tell how far Miss Spens was intending to interpret the poet to this generation specifically. Her interpretation is a very personal one, and some of the qualities she most emphasizes in *The Faerie Queene* a writer in another age would not particularly notice. Natur-

ally she is most interesting on such subjects, though, I think, sometimes unbalanced. There is, for instance, the stress that she lays on *accidie* – the sin that she finds most condemned in the ethic of the poem, probably most important in Spenser's own life: not sloth merely, but the 'passion of melancholy, paralysing action and leading to the desire of death.' And that sin, or passion, or disease, in some of its many forms, will be recognized by those who recognize the melancholy and sense of homelessness in much modern poetry, or have ever noticed the extremely sweet, outcast tones of the saxophone or the Hawaiian guitar. It is also the sin most repudiated, and most to be expected, by allegorical knights or modern people who are cast loose, in their interests, from the practical, and feel that they have nothing to do except the most important thing – whatever that is. Miss Spens exaggerates the prominence of *accidie* in *The Faerie Queene* when, in her re-naming of the books after the deadly sins, she makes it the subject of the first book, the book on holiness; but it is interesting that she does make this antithesis; and it will perhaps illuminate the book for some modern readers.

On the whole Miss Spens' book is most stimulating in suggestions like this, that she throws out by the way. Her central thesis she does not substantiate. It is that *The Faerie Queene* was originally planned and begun as an allegory of the seven deadly sins, not the twelve moral virtues of Aristotle; and that it was to be written in eight books of eight cantos each, the last book (of which the *Mutabilite Cantos* are a fragment) to describe the return of the knights and to elucidate the philosophy of the poem. Miss Spens' reasoning is altogether too high-handed, but sometimes in the course of it she lights up the poem, or makes comparisons with other poets that are valuable in themselves. The book has

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an annoying and perhaps rather serious fault: the author is at the mercy of the academic habit of tracing literary influences; she seems to do it almost unconsciously. In a comparison between Prince Arthur and Marlowe's Tamburlaine, for example, in which she quotes Spenser's line

*His glitter and armour shined far away,*

she interrupts herself to say, for no reason but its own sake, 'a line which may have suggested Milton's "*farre off his coming shone*"'; as though Milton had no mental capacities but assimilation. It is a habit that shakes the reader's confidence in the common sense of the author, and it is unfortunate because sometimes Miss Spens brings together two passages from different poets, imaginatively, to the advantage of both; it is therefore a travesty of something she does extremely well.

THE SERIAL UNIVERSE. By J. W. DUNNE.  
Faber & Faber. 10s. 6d.

To the philosophically minded, time has in all ages been the field of much happy hunting. In this tradition Mr. Dunne is already known to us as a speculator of much charm and some mathematical ingenuity. His previous book, *An Experiment with Time*, invited consideration of the suggestion that in our dreaming we use ideas drawn not from the past only but also from the future. There was in that book a lucidity and simplicity of expression which even against one's preconceptions fought for Mr. Dunne.

It was, of course, desirable to do more than put forward the suggestion. It remained to show how events could be arranged in time in such a way as to make the suggestion reasonable. Mr. Dunne assures us that if we will consider time to be serial within itself in the same way that our consciousness is serial within itself, the matter becomes simple; that

indeed it simplifies much that is confused in modern thought – such matters as the whimsicality of the electron since Heisenberg had to do with it; the dual personality of light; and the curious symbol  $\sqrt{-1}$  whereby Minkowski created a universe, whether he lived in it or not.

The serial nature of our consciousness is illustrated by analogy. An artist picks up his brush to draw the landscape as he sees it. On considering the finished work he realizes that there is something missing – himself. Accordingly, to achieve a truer representation, he represents the painter, painting the landscape, and in a square in the centre of the canvas he inserts, like the miniature world seen through the window of a Flemish painting – the other landscape which he drew first – that which failed to include the painter. Then he realizes that there is more going on than was seen, because not merely is the painter painting, but there is a mind observing the painter painting, as it were another self. So he takes yet another canvas, and representing a mind by a body with modern nonchalance, sets out to complete his universe by representing the self that observed the self that painted the landscape. Of course there is no limit to his labours, for a man may pause to observe why it is that he is pausing to observe, to the  $n$ th degree. If you would know more of the artist it is necessary to add that the author describes him as a logical lunatic. However, it is true that our minds will regress in this fashion, and indeed they do so constantly, to the degree of abstraction that we find useful in our thinking.

Here one bumps into this fact, that the measurement of time as it is employed in our interpretation of the measured physical universe – and wherever there is motion there time, either directly or by substitution, enters into the equations – is dependent on the consciousness of the observer. It is from this situation that

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Mr. Dunne attempts to argue the regression of time as well as of consciousness. Every step which in consciousness would be one further step of abstraction, is, in time, the passage into a further dimension. It should be recalled that when the author's logical lunatic pauses to consider the knowing principle as well as the thing known, he retains both in the creation of new canvases. Similarly in the matter of the dimensions of measurement; in the introduction of regressing time the author retains the old time field, whilst drawing out of it his new time axes.

Having drawn out his new postulate, he turns back to the universe, in the form of the physicists' equations to interpret it anew. It is the method of Newton's 'Principia', with this difference, that Newton argued from the observe fact to the theory, whereas the author is content to argue from his hypothesis to differently interpreted fact. It is probable that Newton would have scolded him. Newton had a way of saying petulantly '*Hypotheses non fingo*.'

One of the pitfalls in writing mathematics is the danger (begot no doubt by the sheer beauty of the equational form that we hear so much about nowadays) of forgetting what one is writing about. The beauty and attractiveness of Mr. Dunne's exposition cannot be denied. When finally riding a wave of vectors and tensors with Minkowski's magical little symbol at the rudder we overtake the velocity of light and turn round to expect the entrance of Mr. Heisenberg; it is too exciting. Facts, however, have curious little ways of their own; the facets that they offer to the experimenter are as hard as diamond. They refuse with a cussedness which is absolute to make any allowance whatsoever for the æsthetic properties of an hypothesis – that is the affair of the speculator.

It is at the bar of fact that the metaphysician must plead if he would

pass over into science. It is this pleading that Mr. Dunne has hitherto neglected. Perhaps in his next book he will bring his ideas to the factual test.

A FROWARD CHILD. By WALTER DE LA MARE. Faber. 2s. 6d.

A THING OF NOUGHT. By HILDA VAUGHAN. Dickson. 2s 6d

SILVER-COLLAR BOY. By CONSTANCE WRIGHT. Dent. 5s

A CHRISTMAS PARTY. By PAUL BLOMFIELD. Bles. 5s.

THE DEVIL AND ALL. By JOHN COLLIER. Nonesuch Press. 12s. 6d.

A CRIME AGAINST CANIA. By A. CALDERMARSHALL. Golden Cockerel Press. 21s.

STRAWBERRY TIME. By R. H. MOTTRAM. Golden Cockerel Press. 21s.

To see through a keyhole is not altogether an uncommon gift of the story-tellers, and to listen too; but most who have the gift look only into a room, not too unlike the rooms they and most of us inhabit. The angle of vision is different from the ordinary, but the things seen are the usual things. Mr. de la Mare has a rarer genius. He finds a door and looks through its keyhole, and beyond that keyhole is not a room, nor even a copy of our familiar world, but a new country altogether, a land where reality is established and what merely seems has scarcely even its surface value. The externals of this story are even commonplace. A dissatisfied woman, a railway journey, an escaping criminal, a stupid, self-satisfied man, Christmas Eve. of these he makes a story so simple, so imaginatively poignant that the reader can swear he has peeped into eternity, and is left with the same sense of unworthiness, of uneasy ecstasy as would be his had he enjoyed a mystical experience. *The Froward Child* – Temple's phrase for life itself – is an essay in the power of chance, a study in the import-

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ance of trifles, by which character is revealed – one's own or another's. Lavinia, on her Christmas journey to Charles' home in Devon, to Charles whom she has decided to marry, takes the relief train instead of the crowded regular one; her carriage is invaded by the sad, sinister little figure with the carpet-bag; follows the edged conversation, the sense of terror, her search for the little man's alleged pursuer, the little man's flight into the snow-relieved night, her arrival at Mieklesham, Charles' grumbling greeting – and, as Lavinia lies in bed and thinks over that journey and that stranger, she knows that marriage with Charles is impossible. That is all; but the journey has been planetary, cosmic; from invented falsehood, and its neat acceptances, to the disturbance of created truths.

Many years ago Mr. Yeats argued that we had lost something immeasurably valuable by our insistence on minute psychological traits; with the disappearance of the simple, heroic figures poetry and the sublime had departed, and by the invasion of individuality we lost tragedy and had for substitute a kind of dingy comedy. It is, indeed, small gain to replace Helen by complex, reduce Odysseus to a case and make of Hippolytus nothing but inhibitions. It is one of Miss Vaughan's greatest virtues as a novelist that, while she writes of individuals, she can make us see them as symbols of the heroic. Her men and women are burdened with more than their own doom, and in their joy and sorrow is the experience of Everyman. *A Thing of Nought* is a story of frustrated love: we have it told exquisitely – save for a few lapses into rather worn phrases – by a girl who, in her own unhappiness, goes to visit the old woman, Megan Lloyd, and hear from her the tale of her tragedy. The details are of the simplest – early, reciprocal love between Megan and Penry Price; his departure to Australia to make a living

and a home; his failure; his silence and conjectured death; Megan's marriage of duty to Rees Lloyd, the stern minister of the little mountain chapel; her grave, secular acceptance of a displeasing life; Penry's return – and the lovers' unquestioned decision that the gulf between them is as bitter and absolute as death; the birth of the miracle son . . . and so to the final tragedy of resignation, lit by the memory of joy and untinged by the cruelty of despair. It is a rare and beautiful story. It is a pity that it should have illustrations of so unsuitable a kind – why, because Mr. Farleigh's black girl was black, should all be black now? The book is well printed; but the decorative stops are fussy, and the printed back cover is in execrable taste.

*Silver-Collar Boy* is a fine example of the bogus *precious*: a touch of Elinor Wylie might have redeemed its simpering falsity, but Miss Wright hardly reaches the level of Miss Helen Beauclerk. Mr. Whistler's illustrations, as clever as pastiche need be, may redeem the story for some. Mr. Blomfield's story of an answer to a question is an excellent blend of allegory, satire and unself-conscious idealism. When little Almeric Bellew, looking forward to a life of adult importance, is perplexed by a sermon on childlikeness as a passport to heaven, he scarcely dreams what answer, years after his early dreams come true, he will have to his puzzled query whether 'all must become as little children?' The answer must be left to readers of his imaginative, sensitive tale: in its course Mr. Blomfield moves, with delicacy and ease, from ironic realism to a tender, gracious fantasy which will charm readers susceptible to an unusual and delightful talent. Six stories about the devil – a polite Voltairean devil – might seem at least five too many; but Mr. Collier's adept knowledge of the devil's temperament and habits, the skill with which he portrays different manifestations of that

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infernal Majesty, will make most readers desire more rather than less devil in their fiction. His style, so sly in its emphasis, so acute in its mixture of high and low, has never been seen to better advantage than in these highly entertaining fables. One instance must suffice, from the tale of George the misogynist, to whom the devil has assigned the governorship over one of his colonies. To this colony comes, by accident, one who has not died properly. What to do with her? No advice is available.

George therefore had nothing but precedent to go on, and precedent made it clear that a mortal must sin in such and such a way, die in such and such a condition, be checked in, checked out; it was as complicated as a case in Court Leet under a Statute of Ed. Tert. Rex., that statute being based on precedents from the Saxon and Norman Codes directly and differently derived from a Roman adaptation of a Græco-Egyptian principle influenced prehistorically by rites and customs from the basin of the Euphrates or the Indus. It was quite like an income-tax form. . . .

Is not the introduction of that altogether too terrestrial distress of income-tax forms admirably contrived? This is a beautifully produced book; but there is a misprint on page 78, eight lines from the bottom. It is the penalty of such excellent books as the Nonesuch Press produces that the minutest flaw is noticed. There are 1,000 copies printed, all signed by the author. Of each of the two latest additions in the enterprising Golden Cockerel series of stories by modern authors, only 250 copies have been printed: Mr. Calder-Marshall's volume is signed by him. Each volume is illustrated by wood engravings — Mr. Mottram's by Miss Gertrude Hermes, Mr. Calder-Marshall's by Mr. Hughes-Stanton — neither has produced characteristic or appropriate work, but one of

Mr. Hughes-Stanton's has a fine speed in it. Mr. Mottram is at his best in *Strawberry Time* and *The Banquet*. He has returned here to those overtones which were noticeable in the poems he published many years ago; and it is a relief to discover that his absorption in plainer, more realistic work has not destroyed in him the power of the fantastic. It is true that, even here, he rarely lets himself go; and his excessive control has always seemed to spring not from strength but from an odd fear of some conjectural consequences; still these two stories show him once again as an author of genuine imagination. Mr. Calder-Marshall's story is a fine piece of work. This author increases in force with each book he publishes; he has that inclination to the *tour-de-force* which has always attracted the young of great ability; but in this legend of a volcano and an island he achieves an emotional simplicity, a sincerity of passion which are far beyond cleverness. All his work has had power; this has beauty.

LANDSCAPE WEST OF EDEN. By CONRAD AIKEN. Dent. 2s. 6d.

THE HOUSE OF THE TITANS AND OTHER POEMS. By A. E. Macmillan. 3s. 6d.

REPLY TO REASON AND OTHER POEMS By NORMAN C. YENDELL. Macmillan. 1s.

BRANWEN. By LL. WYN GRIFFITH. Dent 2s. 6d.

VIENNA. By STEPHEN SPENDER. Faber. 3s. 6d.

MR. AIKEN's *Landscape West of Eden* is the most mature and the most imaginative of these poems. It is a vision of consciousness and the edges of consciousness; of the moods of a profound, subtle, self-analytical mind alone; the metaphysical wanderings, despairs and calms and joys; the divisions of the mind, with the self observing the self. All this is expressed in mythological

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figures – Adam and Eve, their god, the angel and the minstrel – who live in a fluctuating dream-landscape which is sparsely described with the utmost accomplishment. The poem is obscure if it is meant to be a clear allegory, if the characters are meant each to be a consistent personification of one strain in the mind. But in each separate scene of this episodic dream their meaning is, if not intelligible, at least clear to the imagination; the reader will recognize the moods that are so hard to focus, and not to be directly expressed, even if he is left puzzled by the metaphysic of the poem as a whole. The play of light in this poem, its changes of mood, sardonic, compassionate, transcendental, and its sudden, glancing verbal beauty, make it a delight to read.

A. E. also has a metaphysical theme for his long poem, *The House of the Titans*; it is an allegory of the heavenly descent of the soul. It has not the power nor the psychological depth of Mr. Aiken's poem, but it is free also from his (perhaps necessary) obscurity. The blank verse of *The House of the Titans* is clear and quiet, and the poem lives by the nobility of the theme, seen through the words rather than in them, and by the poet's subservience to it. The slight, sometimes beautiful, shorter poems in this volume, though they have many subjects, constantly return, in a word or a phrase, to this same theme, as though it were the water that nourished their existence.

Of the other poems, Mr. Spender's *Vienna* is turned towards the external and the social; *Branwen* and *Reply to Reason*, though they are narratives of events too, are metaphysical and internal in their emphasis. *Reply to Reason*, an account, rather in the style of Mr. Eliot, of the second Ice Age and the death of the last man, is not a very good poem; but it gives the impression of having been written by someone, probably very young, with a keen and curious brain. Till nearly the

end this cynical poem is sustained by the author's delight in the macabre, but his imagination has not breath for the ending, the death of the Rat, the last surviving element of personality. This, which should be terrible, sinks to *Grand Guignol* and mumbling. *Branwen* is in another world. It is the story of a Welsh princess born to suffering and fated to foresee her fate; the poet expresses in her his sense of the unity and continuity of sorrow, and the necessity for an imaginative acceptance of it. He doubts his power to accept it, to walk with Branwen 'into the thorns and torments of her life'; but the poem shows no straining of imagination or language because of this doubt, nor any effort to focus the legend precisely and realistically. Mr. Griffith's concern is with its essential sorrow in which the whole poem is dyed; he tells the external story obliquely and in rather a low tone. His poem has authority; the language is expressive and musical.

*Vienna* is about suffering, but a present one, and it is written in the heat of pity and indignation. Mr. Spender often writes in pity; *Vienna* is not so good a poem as *The Prisoners* or 'Moving through the silent crowds,' in which the pity was entirely a poet's, not at all a partisan's. Mr. Spender's gifts most fit him to write a kind of poetry whose substance he now finds unsatisfying. He is poetically most responsive to personal emotion and the individual thing. But personal life – 'their stalking inner worlds' – and things as they are, he finds, to judge from the last section of *Vienna*, soured and hollow. So his temperament drives him to a political faith, and to the rather desperate writing of a kind of poetry which is really alien to him. *Vienna* is often eloquent, and has passage of surprising exactness and beauty; but there are lumps of quite crude stuff in it; and parts are written in too great heat, and too dubious a heat.

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THE PROUD SERVANT. By MARGARET IRWIN. Chatto & Windus. 8s. 6d.

MISS IRWIN has chosen as the central figure in her latest reconstruction of the past that gallant but ill-fated soldier whose memory is to-day cherished by all that is best in Scotland, but whom, in a time of bitter strife and rivalries, a majority of his own countrymen hounded to the scaffold. Her canvas is large, her scene crowded, her attention to details pre-Raphaelite. Equally faithful is her historicity. 'Montrose,' says Mr. John Buchan in the course of a biography which moved Miss Irwin to the writing of her novel, 'was such a man as his country has not seen again.' Miss Irwin would probably assent to that; but no more than the formal biographer has she sought to erase the one serious stain on her hero's scutcheon, the sack and indiscriminate slaughter which he conceded to his wilder followers at Aberdeen. At the same time she does not underrate the provocation he had received.

In these pages we follow the career of Montrose, from his early studies with a tutor at Glasgow, through his college days at St. Andrews, his early marriage, his travels on the Continent, his assent to the first Covenant, his gradual disillusionment with the Kirk as ruler, and his decision, from which he never looked back, to fight his sovereign's battles in Scotland. Charles was profuse in promises of help, but in little more. Still Montrose fought on through his *annus mirabilis*, until his unlooked-for defeat at Philiphaugh reversed the effects of a series of brilliant campaigns, and drove him into exile. His eventual return, capture, and execution are narrated in a brief epilogue.

It is in his relations with his wife, his 'dear and only love,' that the author permits her imagination to take charge. While still a young bridegroom he crossed the Channel in search of a favourite sister who had eloped with her brother-in-law. But this fruitless quest can hardly have

occupied the three years which Montrose now spent upon the Continent, and it is hard to explain so prolonged an absence from his wife and infant son. However, the many love-passages between this pair are tenderly and intimately drawn, even if the 'dear and only love' was, as some hold, not Magdalen Carnegie but Scotland! Magdalen herself, with her habit of sub-acid irony, remains a baffling figure, but Miss Irwin's old ladies – and old men, too, of whom there is an abundance – are excellent.

For this book is chronicle as well as fiction. Indeed, the mass of inter-relationships described may somewhat tax the patience of the Southron. The fanatic Argyll is drawn with an almost surer pencil than the hero. Add to this a graphic analysis of Charles I's inborn indecision and fatal vacillation, and it will be seen that her readers have much for which to thank Miss Irwin.

Two reflections are permissible. All Miss Irwin's characters, high and low, talk perfect English. This will detract for many readers from that sense of reality, and of faithfulness to the period, which it is the business of a historical novelist to convey. Even an occasional touch of 'braid Scots' and a page or two of the highlanders' clipped and slightly mincing phraseology would have helped the reader to believe more strongly in the several personages. Whatever speech Alasdair MacDonald, Montrose's wild lieutenant from Ireland, used, it cannot possibly have been modern English! Sir Walter Scott, ever scrupulous in this matter of dialect, has left a tradition which his successors cannot abandon without loss.

It has to be admitted, too, that excess of detail clogs the progress of a narrative. What we may call period colour, which dwells with undue insistence on the minutiae of custom, dress and architecture, may defeat its object. Furniture, as well as jargon, comes out of Wardour



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Street. This loving preoccupation with detail is a particular temptation of those who possess, as does Miss Irwin, a miraculous eye for externals; but the poet's art, Dr. Johnson said, is selection, and an earlier critic deprecated sowing with the whole sack. If these injunctions are neglected, the pace of the story will degenerate from a gallop to a jog-trot. The career of Montrose, characterized as it was by lightning rapidity of decision, particularly on the field, requires, if any man's ever did, a corresponding rapidity of treatment. Miss Irwin, who won her spurs with *None So Pretty*, should not hesitate to ply them.

COLLECTED PLAYS. By W. B. YEATS. Macmillan 15s.

WHEELS AND BUTTERFLIES. By W. B. YEATS. Macmillan. 6s.

MUCH has been written about the influence exercised by authors, especially by Rousseau, on the makers of the French Revolution. In future time there will no doubt be much written about the influence of Irish authors, especially of W. B. Yeats, on the Irish Revolution. With cynical and at times bloody-minded good humour the English have tried to obscure the fact that there has been a revolution in Ireland, employing the old trick of giving a dog a good name in the hope of calling him to heel. Everyone else, however, in Ireland or out of it knows there has been a revolution; and the course and the shape of it can be observed by those who read Yeats' works, especially the plays. Of course, there were others. There is a literary tradition of revolution in nearly all Anglo-Irish writers, and especially in the poets. Even Tommy Moore was a rebel, and George Moore might have been had he not hated England more than he loved Ireland. For a successful revolution, a revolution of the spirit, must have more of love than of hate in it: and if there be

contempt it must mask something more terrible than contempt. There were poets before Yeats who anguished heroically; but they had no heroic expression for their anguish. Even the best of them spoke as men who pleaded, or as men who raved, not as men who defied because in their vision the victory was already won, and only waited upon men's acceptance of it. When Yeats began writing, the Nationalist movement, in so far as it was reflected in literature, was rhetorical, plaintive, occasionally cynical, sentimental: he was heroic. And he made the movement heroic.

Whether this was a good thing, or a bad; whether he did harm or benefit, the fact cannot be denied. Take that brief play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, in which the young lover is forgetful of his beloved, as he listens to the Old Woman. Here is her final speech:

It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stop to spend it. many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake, and, for all that, they will think they are well paid

(*She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing.*)

They shall be remembered for ever,  
They shall be alive for ever,  
They shall be speaking for ever,  
The people shall hear them for ever.

That was written in 1902. Those words, or echoes from those words, were in the hearts of the men of the Easter Rising, have been since in the hearts of all who, in one way or another, have tried to

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help the Old Woman to get back 'her four beautiful green fields' It would be foolish to say that, without Yeats, there would have been no Gaelic League, no Sinn Féin, no revolution; it would probably be a mistake to assert that men are conscious of the part played by his work in the national life of Ireland; but there can be no doubt that, without him, the movement would not have had that exalted, heroic quality, that sense of sublime phrase and that carelessness of life, one's own or another's, which we may lament or celebrate.

It is as well to insist at the outset on Yeats' devotion to and power to express the heroic, because without it his theatre can never be understood. In part that theatre is the child of his time, whether by acceptance or rejection. He took his stand, from the first, on the sacred right of the poets – the right to be at the board of kings, because without poetry a king is nothing. He was bitterly opposed to the reign of prose, infecting all literature when he was a young man, and almost supreme in the theatre. He was romantic; he was lyrical, and for him what could not be sung was not true. More than this, he believed that high drama could not come again unless the playwright deserted the curious search into idiosyncrasies and temperamental whims, and returned to the heroic mood – the mood of the Homeric legends, of the Greek dramatists. Hence his preoccupation with his country's legends, and the great tales of the Fianna. It follows that his dramatic effects are entirely different from those sought and achieved in the popular theatre of our time; and his great dramatic skill, plain enough in his first play, *Countess Cathleen*, has never had justice done to it in England because so few people took the trouble to find out what he was trying to do. He told them: but they could not understand.

It is to be hoped that with the publica-

tion of this Collected Edition of the plays – plays, be it emphasized, for acting – some idea of W. B. Yeats' stature as a dramatist will at least become the subject of rumour. The volume contains nineteen original plays, and two versions from Sophocles. They range in date from 1892 to 1934. Their subjects are heroic, tragic, romantic, comic, religious, philosophical. Some of the best are written in that fine prose of which the dramatist is master; others are mixed prose and verse; only a few are entirely in verse or with a very little prose. The fact that these plays are so little known in England, except to readers, is to the discredit of the English stage, not to theirs. It is true that Yeats is an Irish dramatist, and that he writes mostly of Irish subjects; but he writes in English, and the neglect from which these plays have suffered is a disgrace to our theatrical history, and a grim comment on the imaginative poverty of theatrical managers and producers. Not theirs, however, the chief blame. The greatest guilt must be ascribed to our theatre-going or our theatre-neglecting public. Not until we have a theatre in London or some other city which can produce these plays as they should be, can we hope to create a fit audience for a drama which for poetic intensity and dramatic excitement has no parallel in Europe.

As a dramatist Yeats has steadily advanced. Unfortunately, from the point of view of the commercial theatre, his later and theatrically most effective pieces are short one-act plays; and these even – the same is truer of the earlier romantic and heroic plays – demand a kind of acting which is now hardly to be found. Controlled intensity, bone-true imagination, and intellectual passion – these are the notes which the players must strike. Whether in prose or verse, the same challenge is made to them and to the audience. Take, for instance, the final scene of *Deirdre*, where Deirdre defeats Conchubar by dying :—

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CONCHUBAR. You have come too late.  
I have accomplished all. Deirdre is  
mine;  
She is my queen and no man now can  
rob me.  
I had to climb the topmost bough, and  
pull  
This apple among the winds. Open  
the curtain  
That Fergus learn my triumph from  
her lips.

*(The curtain is drawn back. The  
MUSICIANS begin to keen with low  
voices.)*

No, no; I'll not believe it. She is not  
dead –  
She cannot have escaped the second  
time!

FERGUS. King, she is dead; but lay no  
hand upon her.  
What's this but empty cage and tan-  
gled wire,  
Now the bird's gone? But I'll not  
have you touch it.

CONCHUBAR. You are all traitors, all  
against me – all.  
And she has deceived me for a second  
time;  
And every common man can keep his  
wife,  
But not the King.

Nobility and a proud heart have so  
departed from modern poetry and modern  
drama that the passion in that might go  
unnoticed; but not if it were properly  
spoken and finely acted. In one of the  
latest plays (1934, twenty-seven years after  
*Deirdre*) *The Words upon the Window-Pane*,  
there is the same profound passion, passion  
that consumes not only the heart, but the  
mind and the spirit. It is a play of modern  
Dublin, of a varied group of people who  
are attending a séance: the medium,  
against her will and her sitters', is occu-  
pied by the spirits of Stella, of Vanessa and  
of Jonathan Swift in whose house the  
séance is held. Mrs. Henderson, the

medium, speaks in the voices of all three.  
Here is Vanessa pleading with Cadenus.

It is not my hands that draw you  
back. My hands are weak, they could  
not draw you back if you did not love  
as I love. You said that you have strong  
passions; that is true, Jonathan – no  
man in Ireland is so passionate. That  
is why you need me, that is why you  
need children, nobody has greater need.  
You are growing old. An old man with-  
out children is very solitary. Even his  
friends, men as old as he, turn away,  
they turn towards the young, their chil-  
dren or their children's children. They  
cannot endure an old man like them-  
selves. *(In SWIFT'S voice.)* O God,  
hear the prayer of Jonathan Swift, that  
afflicted man, and grant that he may  
leave to posterity nothing but his intel-  
lect that came to him from Heaven.  
*(In VANESSA'S voice.)* Can you face soli-  
tude with that mind, Jonathan?

In the mixed moods, in its growing  
excitement of interest and its sustained  
suspense, this play is one of the most re-  
markable of our time, and gives an extra-  
ordinary opportunity for a great actress.

*Wheels and Butterflies*, which contains  
this play, one other masterpiece, *The  
Resurrection*, and two beautiful but less  
important pieces, also contains essays in  
which Mr. Yeats considers the plays and  
tells of their theatrical presentation. In  
these, too, he gives out of the riches of that  
curious, philosophic, capricious mind, the  
most resolutely searching mind of our  
time. It is possible to believe that he has  
sent his mind up some blind alleys; but  
even in them he finds a strange lamp  
hanging against a traditional building, or  
in the gutter a pattern left by some pre-  
vious traveller. He has something of the  
wide scope that the scholars of the Middle  
Ages had, and his thought is freer than  
theirs of systems, though no more liable  
to occasional perversities. He allows here  
his humour to have its way, as in this

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quatrain, so deftly flung at so many gallant illusions of our time.

Shall H. G. Wells afflict you  
Put whitewash in a pail;  
Paint: 'Science – opium of the suburbs'  
On some waste wall.

In his own positive philosophy he remains true to that creed of Plotinus which he has followed since his youth, no less true though he has never realized to what goal neo-Platonism must lead if it is to live. He is with those who 'prefer Socrates to his thought'; and in a stanza at the end of *The Resurrection* he gives his truth a fitting utterance.

Everything that man esteems  
Endures a moment or a day.  
Love's pleasure drives his love away,  
The painter's brush consumes his dreams;  
The herald's cry, the soldier's tread  
Exhaust his glory and his might:  
Whatever flames upon the night  
Man's own resinous heart has fed.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE. By DOROTHY WELLESLEY. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.

ALTHOUGH we seem to know much about our Dominions, we are still fairly ignorant about our possessions in Central Africa. This volume pays tribute to the memory of the man who realized the value of Nigeria to Britain, who made its development his life work, and who, at the end, was able to hand it over to the Empire. Lady Dorothy Wellesley's short memoir presents us not only with a portrait of the founder of Nigeria, but also, through Mr. Stephen Gwynn's comparatively long historical introduction, with the facts about the formation of the colony. As Goldie himself said, 'When the history of the Victorian age is written . . . the opening up of Tropical Africa will probably stand out as a prominent feature of the latter half of that era.' Perhaps the time has now come when a careful study

of that period in our colonial history can be made, and the value of the work of such pioneers as Goldie thoroughly examined.

In the year 1877 Goldie made his first visit to Nigeria, and in 1879 the National African Company, with a capital of a million sterling, was formed. Seven years later, in 1886, after considerable discussion and no little difficulty, the company was granted its charter and became the Royal Niger Company, endowed with powers of administration which, at the end of the century, were transferred to the Crown. The story of Goldie's administration shows us a man, constantly beset with difficulties, faced with international complications on all sides, handicapped by lack of understanding at home and aided only by his strength of purpose and the resources of his company. At that time the scramble for colonies was at its height, and the territorial expansion of France and Germany brought Goldie face to face with the ambitions of one or two most powerful rivals. That a man, backed only by the resources of a commercial organisation, should have succeeded against such odds bears testimony to his administrative qualities, his strength of character and his faith in his task. His success lay in his respect for local customs and systems of government and his belief in indirect rule.

Lady Dorothy's memoir is a short one, illustrated by extracts from correspondence and devoted mainly to her early recollections of Goldie. His character was by no means an easy one, for he was nervous, hasty and brooked no criticism, yet at the same time he was sympathetic, understanding and charming, 'not only a great man,' as the author says, 'but a creature peculiarly interesting, eccentric and lovable.' We can only regret that his distaste for publicity did not allow him to leave any published record of his work and that it led him to

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destroy all his papers before his death. There is, however, reprinted in the form of an appendix, an introduction which Goldie wrote for a book on one of his campaigns, and in it he gives us a clear statement of his aims

POET IN EXILE. THE LIFE OF HEINRICH HEINE. By ANTONINA VALLENTIN. Translated by HARRISON BROWN. Gollancz. 10s. 6d.

IN this careful and illuminating study, Madame Vallentin follows Heine's career, from its beginnings in a Dusseldorf occupied by the French, through all its public and private complications. The national and international events which so pre-occupied Heine are closely observed; they afford a startling and discouraging parallel with our own time.

The primitive nationalism, which in Heine's youth followed the 'War of Deliverance,' was characterized by brutality, oppression, anti-Semitism and hatred of the foreigner. 'The doctrine of gentleness is an invocation of the Devil' was a slogan actively interpreted by Heine's generation; and whatever zeal young Heinrich may have felt for the cultivation of 'the German spirit' must have been modified by such pronouncements on his race as those of Professor Fries, who observed: 'We should copy the action of the Pharaoh with whose name that of Moses is associated.'

It is not surprising that, in the confusion of his time, Heine's intellectual development should reveal inconsistencies and vacillations. His shifts of ground were no doubt as much due to divisions and conflicts in his own nature as to the complexity of events. But, remembering the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend, what is remarkable is the clarity and prophetic insight of his vision. Consider this, written in the eighteenthies:

'It is the greatest merit of Chris-

tianity to have assuaged the joy of the German in brutal bellicosity, but it has not been able to eradicate that joy completely, and when, one day, the Cross of Christ is broken, the savagery of the old warriors, the wild Berseker wrath, will break forth anew in all the barbaric fury of which our Nordic poets tell in song and saga. . . The hour will come, and like spectators in an amphitheatre, the nations will crowd round Germany to watch the great tourney. I warn you, Frenchmen, keep quiet, and, above all, do not applaud.'

And Karl Marx was barely twenty-six years old when Heine foretold the power that Communism was to become.

It is as a man more than usually alive to the problems of his time and to its spiritual climate, and far in advance of it in his perceptions, that we see Heine in Madame Vallentin's narrative, though it would be wrong to suggest that her perspective is special and limited: her book is notable for its comprehensiveness, and the unhappy lover and love-poet are drawn with the same skill and penetration as the political observer. At a time when poets are again beginning to feel the pressure of the forces shaping the world they live in, and to be aware of new responsibilities, this biography is peculiarly opportune.

BELOW LONDON BRIDGE. By H. C. TOMLINSON and H. M. TOMLINSON. Cassell. 8s. 6d.

SOUTH TO CADIZ. By H. M. TOMLINSON. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

THE ENGLISH SMILE. By CHRISTEN HANSEN. Gollancz. 6s.

I DISCOVER THE ENGLISH. By ODETTE KEUN. Lane. 6s.

THE BOAT TRAIN. Edited by MARY AGNES HAMILTON. Allen & Unwin. 5s.

A GALLANT holiday-maker, neither sober nor otherwise, sat bravely on his exotic

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steed in the merry-go-round, and would not dismount when the music and the motion stopped. 'I've a season-ticket,' he confided to his friends who watched him; 'besides, I'm getting about, getting about; seeing things.' He's the symbol of too many travellers: fixed mentally and spiritually in one place, they regard any violent physical movement as travelling, and never notice that they are looking at nothing beyond the narrow circle of their own gyrations. They have no contacts, and no adventures, and might as profitably stay by their own radiators as risk the occasions of travel. The other traveller, the true traveller, knows more about himself, precisely because he is more aware of others and of the change of scene. Of these Mr. H. M. Tomlinson is one of the greatest. If he walks down a London street, he is on a journey, and he finds in Spain not what he brings but what he finds there. In *Below London Bridge* his lovely talent for rendering the beauty of the Thames is seconded most admirably by the beautiful photographs by his son. Here is the truth about that land, unknown to most Londoners, where the great ships do their business and are served by those whose work seems to us the labour of giants. It is vain to expect from Mr Tomlinson lurid tales of China-town —

My association with Limehouse once was fairly close, yet I don't remember seeing enough lawless activity to flatten a policeman's helmet on a Saturday night. . . The dens of vice in any seaport, or at either end of any city, are never so gay but that in comparison they make boredom in solitude appear as jolly as abounding life. Literature has to answer for much which would embarrass a liar, if he were directly tackled.

The same integrity marks *South to Cadiz*. Those who remember that little masterpiece, *The Snows of Helicon*, will recall Mr. Tomlinson's passionate advo-

cacy for freedom and beauty, his profound distrust of a mechanized world. So in Spain he is that rare thing to-day, a traveller with no axe, political or ecclesiastical, to grind. If he sees beauty, he declares and praises it, and without any false confidence he believes in its permanence and its majesty. That he has found the soul of Spain he would be the last man to claim; but here is a volume of impressions, clear-sighted, tender and memorable, which will take the sensitive reader some way on that enchanted voyage to the land where Arabic culture made its last stand in Europe, and has not yet been finally superseded.

Mr. Hansen's book about England, by which he really means London, is pleasant and effective journalism. He is a Dane who has lived here for some years, and likes the English. He has not, however, lived here long enough to learn that it is sadly inaccurate to speak of Shaw, Barrie and St. John Ervine as 'Englishmen': he will perhaps appreciate his blunder if he is told that to call him a Swede would be an equivalent *gaffe*. He makes a brilliant suggestion for relieving the burden of the National Debt — 'If a tax of one penny were imposed on every ball used in Great Britain, it would not only pay the Empire's war debt, but would also end the world depression.' He speaks of the London theatre and of the plays acted with a severity scarcely according to knowledge; and he makes the reader doubtful of his judgment of acting by his excessive praise of that competent 'character' actor, Sir Cedric Hardwicke. Many will agree with him that Ibsen's plays are to-day, when played, not played to their full value in London; but when Mr. Hansen writes 'I have never seen an English actress touch the hem of tragedy', the reader would like to know whether he ever saw Mrs. Campbell as Hedda Gabler, Sybil Thorndike as Mrs. Alving or Jean Forbes-Robertson as Rita Allmers. *The*

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*English Smile* is a pleasant book, and if it is rather superficial the title is warning enough of that.

Miss Keun gives no information about her nationality, and it is impossible to discover it from her book, since vulgarity and self-satisfaction are not the peculiar possession of any country. The vulgarer passages in the book are not quotable; and the book could be safely ignored had it not been greeted in some places as a serious analytical study. Miss Keun has not, of course, discovered the English. She has not tried to discover anything but London: and her comments on London and Londoners are a strange mixture of naivete, commonplace and bunkum. She complains about the English reserve, especially on sexual matters. It never appears to have occurred to her that even if an Englishman wished to discuss his sexual life, he might think she was an unsuitable confidant. If Miss Keun talks as she writes the average Englishman would be shy of discussing fret-work or body-line bowling with her. If only Miss Keun were a little more intelligent and a good deal more modest she would have realized the dangers of generalizing about national character with no other basis than a few exceptional individuals' reactions to her own distinctive personality. She has no power of objective observation at all: she can only watch herself, and attempts to deduce from her own excessively ill-regulated feelings something she can fob off on the simple as considered judgments. *I Discover the English* has amusing illustrations by Mr. Colin Gill.

There is pleasant reading in *The Boat Train*, a collection of broadcast talks about travel by fifteen authors. The best essays are Helen Simpson's on looking for witches in Savoy, Mrs. Melville's on arriving in England from Jugoslavia, and Rendel Kaulbach's on his explorations in Tibet: the decorations by Betty Aylmer are entertaining.

THE MIND OF NAPOLEON. R. MCNAIR WILSON.  
Routledge. 10s. 6d.

IN his latest book, Mr. McNair Wilson deals with the financial structure of the First Empire and compares the money difficulties of Napoleon with those which face President Roosevelt at the present time. From the last years of Louis' reign he traces the difficulties which beset each of the voluntary governments and explains the views of the various revolutionary leaders. But in his own mind there is but one reason for those difficulties, the whole credit system, which, through its disregard for the canonical law against usury, had destroyed the Christian ideal of government. Far from being an instrument designed for the benefit of the people, government had become subordinate to the will of the bankers who used it for their own profit.

Although Napoleon, as Mr. Wilson believes, came in time to understand the weakness of this monetary system, he was brought face to face with the fact that he must either be dependent on it or crush it just as he had crushed the arms of Austria and her Allies. He made one great effort to do this. When the English instituted the Continental Blockade, Napoleon, in retaliation, set up the continental system, which was designed to prevent the importation of English goods. He hoped by these means to make the English pay in gold for the wheat they imported from the Baltic and to make the money interests, whose centre was London, exert pressure on their Government to negotiate for that peace he so much desired. But he failed. He lost the Russian alliance. He could not control the Mediterranean. And once more he was forced to take up arms.

Many readers will hesitate to agree with not a few of the author's conclusions, because he is so evidently pleading a case: drawing his moral first from Napoleon and then from President Roosevelt he preaches the doctrine of credit reform. One feels that if he had confined himself to a more

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impartial attitude his book might have been, so far as it is a contribution to history, better than one more inconclusive addition to the already overwhelming collection of mediocre Napoleonic literature.

the translation is often clumsy, the power of the narrative will hold the reader to the very end.

CONDEMNED TO LIVE. By JOHANN RABENER.  
Boriswood. 8s. 6d.

THIS very long novel, translated from the German by Mr. Geoffrey Dunlop, in some ways resembles Dreiser's ponderous but strangely lucid account of the American scene in *The American Tragedy*. The amount of contemporary detail appears to be amorphous and profuse, but its very bulk makes an unforgettable picture in the reader's mind. The story is that of a young man who is struggling against the circumstance of his birth and environment: in each book the scene is in a big city at the present day. Dreiser depicted his hero in the act of living and avoiding death, or, one might say, in the act of existing. Herr Rabener's hero, in the act of dying, struggles to live. The scene of this book is post-war Germany, a background where life and culture, shattered and weak from the Great War, is striving to take root and fight back to life.

*Condemned to Live* is a violent book: the turgid vehemence of life in Berlin throws each of the characters into a posture of caricature. They all cling to some belief or hope in a world from which hope, faith, morality and a standard of conduct have vanished. They live and suffer and die hopelessly and violently, the air is shrill and sophisticated with their jibes and strangled commentary: and along with their sorrows the reader becomes sympathetically depressed. It is a nightmare world and Fedor the protagonist walks in a nightmare all his life. In such a book one can well see the roots of much that has passed in Germany: in its essence it is true of its time and place as Dreiser's book was true. And though the choice of words in

FOX. By CHRISTOPHER HOBHOUSE.  
CONSTABLE. 12s. 6d.

HERE at last is a full-length biography of Charles James Fox which is at once witty, wise and tender. Mr. Hobhouse's sarcasm is brilliant, yet it never obscures his sympathy, nor does the excellence of his narrative gift interfere with his power of summary and condensation. It is a miracle indeed to find an admirer of Fox with a true appreciation of Pitt, a disciple of Burke with a kindly understanding of poor North, but it is almost stranger to find so warm a supporter of Shelburne, so admiring a judge of Sheridan, in this latest victim to the charms of Henry Holland's son Charles. Not that Mr. Hobhouse is by any means a hero-worshipper: rather he seems to strip his subject of any possible rags and shreds of virtue; he lays bare the gambler, the opportunist; he shows up the profligate and the reckless politician who cared for nothing but his view of the truth, and preferred some private wisdom of his own to the shrewd, cold sense and public honesty which guided his great opponent. Yet Mr. Hobhouse makes abundantly clear Fox's charm, his generosity, his magnificence, his outsizedness in body and mind and soul. From his defence of Parliament against Wilkes to his refusal to support the proposal for a memorial to Burke, Fox's actions were always cast in heroic proportions: his swarthy, burly genius was as remote from everything small and mean as it was often tragically near a hippopotamoid absurdity. Mr. Hobhouse defines by contrasts, describes by juxtapositions; his portraiture is one of antitheses; and, it must be admitted, his results more than justify his method. It would be hard to better such sentences on Burke as 'the guiding light



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which led him to spend ten years of his life in the thankless task of persecuting Hastings was not the reforming zeal of a Macaulay or a Mill, but a romantic challenge to destroy the man whose narrow commercial greed had pillaged the gorgeous accumulations and violated the timeless religions of the East. . . . 'Continuity, tradition, prescription, antique right: those were the themes that moved him to language Shakespeare would have envied. One of the altars Burke had set up in his mind was the British Constitution. Deep study of its history had convinced him of its merits, its haphazard intricacy fascinated his sense of texture, but its continuity alone would have sufficed to make him love it.' Or, again, 'he abominated change, but loved decay.' Or, on the speeches on American Taxation and Conciliation, this: 'These two speeches, so different in their approach to an identical conclusion, exhaust their subject; and not their immediate subject only, for they comprise the whole canon of political wisdom. For any crisis of affairs, for any crucial public decision, somewhere in their depths an oracle is to be found. They are our Sibylline Books.' It is hard indeed to stop quoting, for such well curbed, well knit, forceful English, with the surface and temper of a well-made high road, is a rare pleasure.

Mr. Hobhouse is, however, at times a little careless: Fox was hardly 'half a Stuart'; to dismiss the New Model Army, and the whole Commonwealth indeed, as 'that reptile rule' is childish, as is the extravagant assertion that 'The French revolution produced no single leader who was not detestable; while it destroyed much that was bad, it substituted nothing that was not worse; and nothing that it created outlasted the decade. . . . In theory it was a liberation: in fact, it was the vilest of all tyrannies.'

But he must be forgiven much for his style. Here at last is a young historian

across whose pages, never even for a moment, falls the shadow of Mr. Lytton Strachey: who is equally immune from the contagion of Mr. Guedalla's methods: whose literary obligations are to Macaulay, to Gibbon, and, above all, to Burke himself, to whom he returns with the same fervour shown by the first Protestants who, brushing past Popes and councils, fled to the apostolic fountain heads.

ARCHETYPAL PATTERNS IN POETRY. By MAUD BODKIN. Oxford University Press. 12s. 6d.

THE thesis of Miss Bodkin's book, as its title suggests, is formulated in terms taken over from Dr. Jung. Miss Bodkin holds that archetypal patterns similar to the culture-patterns studied by anthropologists are present within the experience communicated through poetry, and that they may be discovered there by reflective analysis. The archetypes most fully dealt with are those of Rebirth, Heaven and Hell, Woman, the Devil, the Hero, and God. For the reflective analysis necessary to the discovery of these archetypes in poetry Miss Bodkin is peculiarly well fitted. There can be no doubt that she would have directed her studies to poetry even if she had never heard of Jung. A poem is to her a poem, not a symptom. To her the interest of a poem lies in its poetry; the greater a poem, the more deeply she is interested. She employs her reflective analysis to reveal the archetypes because in so doing she is deepening for herself, and hopes to deepen for her readers, the appreciation of the poetry. Only those who are unfamiliar with the common approach to art will regard her point of view as the obvious one. It is exceptional; it is perhaps unique. Her study is the work of a philosophically-minded psychologist who is a genuine appreciator of poetry. Her range is wide; she has a detailed knowledge of literature from

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Æschylus to Virginia Woolf; she can enjoy Dante and D. H. Lawrence; she can elucidate Lucretius and T. S. Eliot.

It is good in days when it is fashionable to deny the intellect a part in poetry to find so firm a defence of the function of thinking in its creation and its appreciation. 'Thought,' writes Miss Bodkin, dissenting from A. E. Housman's view of poetic appreciation, 'may be subtle, pliant, yielding itself to serve and follow the living imaginative activity. It is only so far as reflective analysis is part of thought of this nature, penetrated by feeling, docile and reverent towards its object, though loyal to its own standard, that analysis can be helpful in the appreciation of poetry.'

The quotation gives an excellent description of Miss Bodkin's own method. Here is one brief example of her method at work. She quotes from *The Waste Land*:

There I saw one I knew, and stopped  
him, crying: 'Stetson!  
You who were with me in the ships at  
Mylae!  
That corpse you planted last year in  
your garden,  
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom  
this year?  
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its  
bed?'

and comments: 'A hazardous stroke, yet to me it seems a triumphant one – to choose that glimpse of unreal crowds in city fog, for the stirring of associations of Osiris and his mysteries: the grain, or corpse, under the huddled earth, with its uncertain hope of resurrection, that frost or rifling beast may destroy.'

Miss Bodkin is conspicuously 'docile and reverent towards her object though loyal to her own standards' in her analysis of St. John's account of the Master as Divine. No orthodox Christian can accept her point of view, but she is as

obviously sincere as she is reverent in her determined loyalty to what seem to her the deepest forces and demands of her own nature. She seeks to identify religious and poetic faith, but she does so in a way which, even if she leaves us unconvinced, makes it difficult summarily to dismiss her view, as T. S. Eliot summarily dismisses the view that poetry is not religion, but is a capital substitute for religion. 'Nothing in this world or the next,' says Mr. Eliot, 'is a substitute for anything else; and if you find that you must do without something, such as religious faith or philosophic belief, then you must just do without it.' To identify two things is not to substitute one for another: true. But since – as Miss Bodkin herself explicitly asserts – 'Poetry makes no claim to historic truth; the Gospel story does make this claim,' can poetic and religious faith be identified?

It would be unfortunate should this review lead the reader to suppose that in any part of her long book Miss Bodkin is engaged in an attempt to blur away the boundaries between things essentially dissimilar and to reduce them to a common state of vagueness. The discovery that individual objects have fundamental resemblances does not, as a matter of fact, tend to minimize their individuality, but rather to accentuate it. The little boy who exclaimed: 'Mummy, there's a man in the dining-room,' when he learnt that it was his father in dress clothes, knew his father more surely and saw him more clearly than when 'Daddy' was merely 'Daddy.' It is an odd thing that we all have two eyes and a vermiform appendix; perhaps a little odder that the same archetypal patterns should reveal themselves in the poetry of Æschylus, William Morris, and T. S. Eliot, but the realization may be as profitable to the student of poetry as the study of anatomy to the medical student. (Whether or not it is more legitimate to speak of a Collective Unconscious than to speak of a Collective

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Appendix is too big a question to embark on here.)

One of the most interesting sections of Miss Bodkin's book is, perhaps, that concerned with the archetype Man as it appears in the writings of women. Miss Bodkin's analysis of Mrs. Woolf's *Orlando* will send at least one of her readers back to that astonishing work with a new understanding and a new impulse of appreciation.

Miss Bodkin's prose is usually as transparent as good glass. Some critics will perhaps describe it as undistinguished; others will take pleasure in its formality and in its freedom from gratuitous quirks. *Archetypes in Poetry*, though highly serious and not in the least 'brilliant,' will be welcomed by those who are prepared to tackle diligently a solid piece of work written with an enthusiasm none the less apparent for its sobriety. It will not be enjoyed by the frivolous or by the impatient, but it should find many readers both among psychologists and students of literature.

THE MAN LISZT. By ERNEST NEWMAN.  
Cassell. 12s. 6d.

IN SEARCH OF MOZART. By HENRI GHÉON.  
Tr. from the French by ALEXANDER  
DRU. Sheed & Ward. 15s.

IN the Foreword to his book Mr. Newman declares that he is certain to displease three classes of reader: 'those who object on principle to all musical biography, those who object to frank biography, and those who object to the destruction of a biographical legend in which they have been brought up to believe.' To the last, presumably, he protests that he has had no intention of 'de-bunking'—'an odious word,' he says, 'for an odious thing.' Whatever the precise definition of this 'odious word' may be, and whatever name one may alternatively apply to Mr. Newman's activities, one may say that they are

entirely devoted to the destruction of the saintly figure of the Liszt legend, and to the re-interpretation of this complex and contradictory nature in the light of the recently published Liszt-d'Agoult correspondence and the 'Mémoires' of Madame d'Agoult herself. A rosy haze of glory tends to surround the historical Liszt, projected by the 'tradition' of battalions of pseudo-pupils and satellites even as far as the present generation; the mists, however, have been penetrated by these newly discovered facts, and the austere benevolent old man, the arch-priest of high art, must face up to the most searching examination by the most 'scientific' methods of modern biography. Mr. Newman squares his shoulders to the task, if with a certain relish, at least with a magnificent equipment of technique and information.

Consequently it is a rather sorry and mud-stained figure which arises from his pages; Mr. Newman's sole pre-occupation is with the case for the prosecution, and he is a fierce advocate. Just as the Liszt legend tends to palliate its hero's most dubious escapades, so do these most recent researches tend to cast a shadow over his apparent magnanimities. With a life so full of hollowness, it is easy to discountenance any nobility in the most generous gesture. It should be understood, therefore, that this present study is in no sense an exhaustive biography of Liszt, nor is it a contribution to the interpretative criticism of his music, and a passion for the truth, one imagines, rather than a sympathy for his subject, has induced Mr. Newman to embark on his iconoclastic task. He extenuates nothing, but sets down Liszt as he believes him to have been, weak, vacillating and vain. By the same token, the figure of the Countess d'Agoult stands forth in a much more attractive light than hitherto, and we must be grateful for the vindication of this essentially 'modern' and rationalist character; 'No one,' as Mr. Newman says, 'knew

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better the dualism of his (Liszt's) soul, or grieved over it more, than Marie.' He carried to an extreme limit the words of his almost exact contemporary, Robert Browning:

God be thanked, the meanest of his  
creatures  
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the  
world with,  
One to show a woman when he loves  
her !

But poor Marie can have had small reason to thank God for this phenomenon. She seemed to have stood firm for all the best of the strangely warring elements of his composition, and to have been rewarded with slander and abuse. The tragedy lay in Liszt's awareness of his own lack of unity, a reflection of which, though Mr. Newman does not go into this question, one may easily find in his work—a vivid harmonic imagination without much sense of the structural implications of tonality; an intimate knowledge of the pianoforte with a desire to exploit its most meretricious characteristics; a high interpretative gift with the trickery of a mountebank—all these strange mixtures become more and more explicable in the light of Mr. Newman's penetrating analysis.

To pass from Mr. Newman's 'Liszt' to M. Ghéon's 'Mozart' is like travelling from a bleak granite moor to an orchard in full bloom. It would be hard to imagine two more divergent attitudes to musical biography. Mr. Newman writes out of a relentless regard for the truth; M. Ghéon to ventilate a boundless enthusiasm. 'Yes, Wolfgang Amadeus,' he cries, in an apostrophe printed, perhaps unfortunately, upon the dust-jacket, '... The book I am devoting to you is without excuse, for it has only one; love.' Consequently, having absorbed this logically obscure proposition, it is with some misgivings that one passes on into the body of the book itself, since one feels that there are

more qualifications indispensable to a biographer than this solitary, albeit fundamental, one. Indeed, had Mr. Newman shared such views, it is obvious that his book would never have been written; no one could be less in love with his subject than he, or more so than M. Ghéon. *In search of Mozart* is a more warm-hearted than analytical study, and although it is widely comprehensive in scope, its author does not pretend to make any new contribution, interpretative or factual, to his subject. From his luxuriant pages is thrown off a rather incoherent mass of ideas and intuitions, sometimes suggestive, sometimes trite, and sometimes confused. Thus when he discusses the 'Infinite Melody' of the Romantic period and its relation to classical phrase-structure, or when he observes that the common nomenclature of human emotions is not applicable to the music of Mozart, one feels the evidence of constructive, if not original, thinking; when, on the other hand, he speaks off-hand of Haydn having 'fixed the rules' of quartets and symphonies, one is irritated by so facile an acceptance of ready-made fallacies. His discursive and vaguely hysterical style does not readily present a definite point of view; it may, however, serve to infect others with his enormous admiration for Mozart's music — an admiration which naturally commands the deepest sympathy. It is a style, I think, which is seen to its worst advantage in the English language.

Of Mozart's character M. Ghéon will stand no disparagement: 'Wolfgang,' he says, 'was impregnated with God once and for all,' adding that 'Under the low chestnuts that flank the Salzach's bluish waters, even the most voluptuous of evenings are spiritual.' Liszt should have dwelt beneath these transcendental trees; he would have saved Mr. Newman many a pang.

The music-type examples which illustrate M. Ghéon's book are full of blunders; one wonders who is responsible for such a

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mass of mistakes. An excellent and practical feature is the appendix of available Mozart gramophone records, in chronological order, with which the book concludes.

THE WANDERING PRINCE. By L. DUMONT-WILDEN. Translated by WARRE BRADLEY WELLS. G. Bell. 10s. 6d.

PRINCE CHARLIE AND HIS LADIES. By COMPTON MACKENZIE. Cassell. 10s. 6d.

M. DUMONT-WILDEN is to be congratulated on having written an excellent monograph, and on having found within a few months of publication a capital translator. Dealing with the same period, his book and Mr. Mackenzie's present a notable contrast in style and composition. M. Dumont-Wilden is classical, critical, impartial: the true Gallic clarity and concision are his. Mr. Mackenzie's quality is Gothic, digressive, and exhaustive. Moreover he is a violent partisan. For him any stick will do to beat a Whig with; he 'never lets the Whig dogs have the best of it,' still less their historians. Thackeray is trounced, justly it may be agreed, for slandering the Old Pretender's morals; but 'brandy-faced Anne' is all the recognition allotted to a sovereign whose importance and sound sense recent historical research has tended to enhance. The expression occurs in connection with the Act of Union, which the author would like to see revoked.

Both writers deal graphically with the stirring events of the '45. Those who read history for the interests of its personalities chiefly will prefer Mr. Mackenzie's version; those who desire a balanced estimate of the way in which a prominent personage influenced and was influenced by his era will prefer M. Dumont-Wilden's. A perusal of both books brings home to the reader the difficulty of exactitude in biography. M. Dumont-Wilden, for example,

says that the Old Chevalier alienated his young wife by taking a mistress; Mr. Mackenzie will not hear of this, but offers no valid explanation of Clementina's rapid disillusion with her husband. Again, M. Dumont-Wilden asserts, and Mr. Mackenzie denies, that Clementina Walkinshaw became the Young Chevalier's mistress during the campaign of the '45. Such matters, however, are doubtless hard to substantiate, and historically, after all, are of secondary moment.

But Mr. Mackenzie ranges over a wide field with amplitude of knowledge and illustration, supplying much recondite information about the women who influenced the Prince's fortunes. The deputy wooing of his mother by the gallant Wogan, a figure so beloved by Andrew Lang, is a romance in itself. If he has failed to make Clementina Walkinshaw interesting, who has succeeded? Of her and the Prince's offspring, 'the Lass of Albany,' even Burns could not make much; and within a brief space of her celebration by the poet she too, after dutifully tending her father, had passed away. It was ever so with the Stuarts; what began brilliantly or hopefully always ended in gloom and despair. The '45 is one of the most romantic episodes in history, but how soon over. Thereafter we are faced, alike in Mr. Mackenzie's and M. Dumont-Wilden's versions, with the gradual, sagging deterioration of one cast by nature in an heroic mould, but without strength of character to fill it out. Not even Mr. Mackenzie can get away from the stark fact that neither the Prince's mistress nor his wife could permanently tolerate his company.

As to Miss Walkinshaw, who remains to both our authors a problematic figure, it seems best to interpret her in the simplest terms. She was a commonplace woman with one absorbing passion, her devotion to Charles Edward. What prospect of happiness was there when he sent for her

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to join him? Back from his surreptitious visit to London, he was sensible that long years of exile and dependence lay before him. He had been reading *Tom Jones*, M. Dumont-Wilden tells us, and had realized that Jacobitism of Squire Western's type was all the support he might now expect in England. Lonely and wretched, he thought to console himself with Clementina's devotion. But she had neither beauty of person nor mental gifts to hold him. The accusations of treachery brought against her by his adherents cannot be substantiated. In her letter to the Prince informing him that she had left him for good she is for once, at any rate, not 'colourless,' if 'plaintive as ever.' (These are M. Dumont-Wilden's adjectives.) She had put up for eight years, she writes, with what no other woman would have endured, going in daily risk of losing her life. Loss of health 'has obliged me at last to take this Desperate Step of removing from your Royalle Highness with my child, which nothing but the fear of my life would ever have made me undertake any Thing without your knowledge.' No acknowledgment of this letter survives. Charles was not much of a writer. Besides, what defence was there? Had he tried to exculpate himself, we should have thought the worse of him.

### AT THE PLAY

PANTOMIME is doing well this season: or so it is safe to assume from the fact that it was impossible for a critic to get a seat in time to write about any of the Cinderellas, Whittingtons, Sindbads or Aladdins who are adorning the London stage. Of other revivals, ranging from *Peter Pan* to *Buckie's Bears*, good business is reported – a word of special commendation dashed with a touch of the sinister, must be given to *Toad of Toad's Hall*.

About the middle of last month some Londoners must have wondered whether Mr. J. W. Dunne had succeeded in making a serious dent in the time-sequence. First bright lights outside the Alhambra announced that the 'The Bing Boys are Here'; then a newspaper placard proclaimed to the hurrying pedestrian that the G.O.M. was dead. For a moment confidence in the ordinary sequence of events was definitely shaken, until investigation proved that the placard referred to Sir Albert Spicer, and that the Bing Boys were back. Those who saw that popular show during the war need, to judge from the look of them, no urging to go and see it again in its revised form. They are all going. To one who did not see it then, it provides an admirable opportunity of studying the art of one of our most consummate actors, an actor who excels in a kind of acting which has now scarcely any representatives on the London stage. He has a superb stage personality. This is quite different from having and displaying a personality on the stage. We have plenty of actors and actresses of whose personality we are made only too aware, as aware as they are conscious. They force us into the kind of intimacy which we go to the theatre to avoid: they are charming or tiresome, arrogant, petulant or precise – always their little selves, without any ability to construct or to evoke. One leaves the theatre thinking that they may be all that could be wished at bed or board, but they are no use on the boards. We have, too, some good 'character' actors: men and women who can invent a part which can then be forced into a play often with rather distracting effects on the rest of the cast. This power is sometimes confused with such a gift as Mr. Robey's, the construction of a stage personality. Although the old music-hall was the last refuge of these constructed personalities, it is not true that they played no part on the legitimate stage. J. L. Toole and

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Henry Irving were both masters of their kind: and in a world normally remote from such efforts, one great actor has succeeded in imposing a theatrical personality – Mr Charles Chaplin, in his work for the screen, has always practised this difficult and subtle craft. Still the music-hall fostered this talent to a degree scarcely possible for most legitimate actors. and of the old music-hall comedians Mr George Robey is now left alone in his eminence.

Directly he appears on the stage we accept him as he is. We do not begin to ask whether he belongs to our world: he takes us immediately into his. The grotesque figure, the black half-moon eyebrows, the astounding clothes, lifted from the pegs of some fantastic slop-shop, the feet of a fairy, the delicate insinuating, naughty hands, the shameless wink, the face that guards a thousand slips, the benignity of surprise at our gross misunderstandings of his innocence, the shy, shame-faced recognition that he too begins to understand our misunderstandings, the determination to do better with the next joke, the failure and the subsequent confusion – that is George Robey. He is a transporting figure; and what relation he may bear to the man, who presumably exists, that constructs this figure in the dressing-room, or later on drives back to some ordinary human home, we neither know nor care to ask. It is the stage personality which concerns, excites and entrances the audience.

An actor of such genius can carry a good deal on his shoulders; and it is the way of theatrical managers to ask him to carry rather too much. Excellent as is much of the dancing and the nonsense in *The Bing Boys are Here*, it would be pleasant to see Mr. Robey in some piece where there was not so much distraction. He is ably assisted, it is true, in many of the numbers. The good-humoured heartiness, the robust sense of fun with which

Violet Loraine plays opposite to him are admirable: and Rebla, as Lucifer Bing's less volatile brother, has a deft lugubriousness which satisfied until he appeared as a juggler, when it became evident that his greatest talent was there. Still all three principals had the one quality of inestimable value in a show of this kind – a dazzling spontaneity. There was not much improvisation; but nearly every speech and every bit of business had the air of improvisation. There was none of that slick perfection which some of us find rather boring in the more spectacular and highly organized modern revival: and to appear careless in a piece of this kind needs far more care than any effort of drilled competence.

Of recent books connected with the theatre three have, in different ways, considerable importance – Mr. Sean O'Casey's *Windfalls* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.), *Six Soviet Plays* (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.), and Mr. H. Granville-Barker's *The Study of Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 3s. 6d.). Mr. O'Casey's book is a miscellany of poems, stories and plays. As a poet Mr. O'Casey has something of the natural eloquence, the heedless profusion and the slackness of form that accompanies it, which were common in Anglo-Irish poetry before the coming of W. B. Yeats. His prose has that instant, frightening, dramatic quality which has made him one of the most impressive playwrights of our time; and in the short stories here printed he uses the same talent in mastery of another form. The two one-act plays in the book are farces which differ from the ordinary commercial farce in that the author and his characters have a relation to ordinary life. That they should have remained unproduced is a mistake which must surely be quickly remedied. After living in Mr O'Casey's burning, vehement world of men and women, it is a curious experience to turn to the world portrayed in *Six Soviet Plays*.

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Just as philanthropists are alleged to be careless of Lazarus at the door, so your professional proletarian seems to find it impossible to see men and women. Some of these plays bear the same relation to the religion of Marxism as did such tracts as *Froggy's Little Brother* or *Jessica's First Prayer* to the early Evangelical movement. That such a play as Afinogenyev's *Fear* should have been regarded as a serious addition to the theatre is a grim commentary on the fatal effects of creed on the arts. It has not so much artistic quality as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: and all these plays, as Mr. Elmer Rice admits in his introduction, are quite devoid of interest to those who look to Russia for dramatic novelty. They are old-fashioned in technique, excessively naive in characterisation; of the dialogue it is impossible to judge from these Americanized translations. By far the best plays are Katayev's farce *Squaring the Circle* and Bulgakov's *Days of the Turbins*. These two plays betray, whether consciously or not does not matter, the ordinary person's impatience at the excessive solemnity of Bolshevik propaganda. One of the oddest things about Soviet literature is that authors whose whole temperament and character are evidently in revolt against the mental slavery under which they live are taken quite seriously as friends of the ideals they are attacking. It is no doubt possible that some of the more intelligent people in authority are aware when authors are writing ironically, and prefer to ignore it or even find in it a useful release from their own pent-up emotions. At first, it is true, *Days of the Turbins* (produced in 1926), in which anti-Bolsheviks are treated sympathetically and as human beings, was attacked as politically harmful; for the four years, 1928–1932, it was banned, but has now resumed its place as one of the most popular plays in the Moscow theatre. Whether this is because all bourgeois like the *Turbins* are now absorbed or killed, as the translators

suggest, or whether it is because Bolshevism as a religion has grown less bigoted, only those familiar with Soviet Russia can determine.

Mr. Granville-Barker's book – it consists of a lecture delivered at Cambridge last summer, with extensive and highly important notes – is one of the best contributions on the study of the theatre he has made. That is to say, it is one of the wisest essays on drama that has been written. He predicts great things from the generous support now given to the drama not only in the younger Universities, but also at Oxford and Cambridge. What he has to say about the London theatre will be read with sorrowful agreement: and it is to be hoped that his plea for a non-commercial theatre – why should not the drama be put on the same level as painting? – will receive due attention. As an example of the shrewdness and profundity of his thought, what could be better than this passage on acting?

'Anybody can act. But the highly developed *art* of acting is a very difficult art indeed. It does not consist simply in pretending to be somebody you are not. Nor, obviously, can it be *self-expression*, though that is a part of the training for it. The definition is inadequate; but we could call it the expressing of the dramatist's idea in terms of the actor's personality, on the playing of a tune upon the complex and uncertain instrument which is one's physical, emotional and intellectual self. And that is only the beginning of the business. There is the problem of giving to this composite and alien creature, when you have embodied it, adequate expression within the narrow limits of time and opportunity which are all that the longest play and part can afford. There is the still harder problem of reconciling this expression with the equal need for expression of the other characters in the play. For a good actor is



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one who not only gives himself utterly to his own part, but is responsive enough to his fellows to help them play theirs. No, it is not an easy art'

Mr. Granville-Barker has here put into a few words more of the truth about acting than many authors can express in vast volumes. When that National Theatre (for which a fund of £150,000 already exists) is brought to a tardy birth – committees have a dismally protracted labour – no one so good, so obviously right as producer could be chosen as Harley Granville-Barker.

### AT THE PICTURE GALLERIES

DECEMBER was a month of disappointments. The promise of exhibitions of two classic modern artists, Picasso and Max Liebermann, in addition to those of the Society of Wood Engravers and the East London Group, was rare indeed. Yet the memorable pictures of the month were in none of these shows, but were the work of beginners and of a neglected artist of the early nineteenth century.

Mr. Hugh Willoughby's collection of Picassos, now on loan at the Tate, is, of course, a pleasure – for when is Picasso not a pleasure? Like Turner's, his pictures are never bad; they always have a point, even if it is only in his amazing mastery of the terms in which he chooses to paint. And like Turner, too, he is not so much a painter of great pictures, as great because of their number and range. He can only be judged from a full chronological exhibition, and such an exhibition would also be an index to modern art. One hopes for this even in London whenever a show is announced, but the hope seems vain. Mr. Willoughby's collection certainly has no such pretensions. It consists mainly of drawings, of which the most interesting are the earliest sketches of the 'Barcelona period,' done in 1898, and the latest, two versions of 'women by the seashore,' done in 1932. These last are magnificent

examples of easy expression of movement and feeling in what is most concisely described as Picasso's 'entrails' style. In contrast to these, and an instance of his versatility, are the etched illustrations to Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' at the Zwemmer Gallery. His drawing is neither an imitation nor a parody of the classical; it seems to be the exact vehicle for depicting a poet's Olympus. The delicacy with which he mocks and interprets is a delight.

The thirty years' difference in age between Picasso and Liebermann is exaggerated by their divergent traditions. Liebermann is a painter of the great nineteenth-century movement in German art; a movement which we despise and neglect much as English art is despised and neglected abroad. And if our loss by this is not so great, it is still a loss, and the Leicester Galleries are to be congratulated on attempting to remedy it. It is only unfortunate that their choice was Liebermann. For, however much one may be interested in the school, it is almost impossible to be thrilled by this painter. It is a pity, too, that the exhibition is rather unbalanced, including six pictures painted in 1934, his eighty-seventh year, and only four from the period 1900 to 1920, the prime of his life. He is revealed as a painter of great mastery, and his drawings, the most attractive part of the show, confirm this impression. He can do anything he likes, but he chooses to do such dull things. His point of view is admirably inclusive. He is interested in colour and composition, technique and style, character and incident; yet his interest never seems sufficient to make his pictures important in any of these aspects. He is at times almost passionate, almost witty, almost scientific, but he is never entirely wholehearted. Nor does he seem to progress. One expects the work of a very old painter to have a certain fiery penetration, but there is no fire and very little change from his earlier work in these last

## Pictures

paintings Has any painter ever attained greatness in expressing a balanced view in balanced terms? This would seem to be Liebermann's ideal; perhaps he reaches it—if so, it is a form of greatness which is essentially dull.

Dullness, too, is the trouble of the East London Group. Their talent, always mild, is becoming disconcertingly so. It seems a pity that Miss Brynhild Parker, having chosen such an inspiring subject as Brighton Pier, should not have indulged her baroque aptitude a little further and made an inspiring picture. Easily the best pictures were those of Mr. Henry Silk, who has a real vision, mild, too, perhaps, but quite personal.

The Society of Wood Engravers was exhibiting without three of its most important members, David Jones, John Nash and Eric Ravilious, and there was little new talent to fill the gap. Wood engraving is a dangerously attractive art; to make a design that looks pretty when it is nicely cut is easy, but to make a really consistent design requires faultless and concentrated logic. The medium is a reversal of the artist's customary way of thinking, since, instead of drawing in black on a white ground, his lines are cut in white on a dark ground. The modern method is to exploit this to the full, leaving the greater part of the print black and suggesting the shapes in white. The white—and its function, of course, carries a connotation for the black—can be used as outline, or as colour, or as light, or for some effect without a realistic purpose. The difficulty, which often, unfortunately, proves disastrous, is that, when the spaces in a print are black and positive, any confusion in these various ways of treating the line is shown up. Similar inconsistency is often unnoticed in an etching where the blank white intervenes. The great feature of this exhibition, the four large pearwood blocks by Miss Gertrude Hermes, are examples of masterly com-

mand of the medium. In contrast also with many of the other prints, they are significant interpretations of their subject. Whereas one feels that many of the artists set out to think of a subject—say a sleeping cat seen from above—Miss Hermes, inspired by an idea such as 'Fathomless Soundings,' has given it unique expression.

The only other modern paintings of interest last month were the work of students and of a group of very young artists who held an exhibition at 64 Charlotte Street. And these were interesting not only for their promise, but for a certain achievement. The work of beginners is always baffling, for its merit is no clear indication of the quality of the artist, but the Exhibition of the Sketch Clubs of fifteen art schools at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, combined with the previous exhibition of that of the Royal College of Art, gave one at least an impression. It was remarkable that there was scarcely any abstract work; probably a healthy sign. For abstraction is an achievement, and work such as the recent carvings of Mr. Henry Moore at the Zwemmer Gallery, where the appeal lies simply in the subtle and exquisite relation of two shapes to one another, is unattainable without knowledge, experience and thought. The tendency to return to incident and sentiment was very clear in the lithographs and etchings of Mr. Jackson, of Woolwich Art School. These are all interiors, and the spacial relations of the figures within the confined rooms make three dimensional designs in the direct tradition of Victorian illustration and comparable with Millaïs at his best. The two other outstanding artists were Mr. Wm. J. Walker, whose chalk 'figure composition' has a rare, Renoir-like vision, and Mr. J. Mounsey, whose work, though very uneven, was strikingly powerful and dramatic.

The artists of Charlotte Street are less wild, but they have pleasing richness

## Music

in colour and imagination, and exhibitions of artists with a common affinity, if not a common aim, are always interesting and impressive; while collections of more competent, and possibly more talented artists, such as that of the Goupil Salon, fail because there is no unity or apparent purpose. None of the Charlotte Street artists were outstanding; Mr. Rupert Shepherd's work was the most pleasant, possibly Miss Palmer's was the best, but any of them may be interesting in the future, and their exhibition was an event.

The one entirely pleasing and satisfactory painter of the month was, however, James Ward. Messrs Ellis and Smith, of Grafton Street, were exhibiting his large picture of 'Ralph John Lambton, on Undertaker'. The picture was exhibited as a masterpiece of the English sporting school, but though the huntsman, the horses and the hounds, as well as Mr. Lambton, are portraits, this gives a false impression of Ward's position as a painter. His usual paintings of blood horses, such as the two lately hung in the Tate basement, are extremely dull; he preferred a cart horse, or, best of all, a bull. In this picture his pleasure is clearly in his curling, rolling landscape, with its abundant trees and bushes, and in the waving tails of the hounds, and the way their ribs show through their parti-coloured coats. The sporting school is at its best and most characteristic in the charming serenity of Stubbs. Ward's genius was for restless movement; his best pictures have the beauty of Brussels sprouts and curly cabbages. He is, indeed, curiously detached from his contemporaries. He started, it is true, by imitating his brother-in-law, Morland, but this was because he himself was trained as a mezzotinter, not as a painter, and Morland was the only artist whom he could watch at work in oils. His great inspiration came by chance. It is curious to think of London without the National Gallery, and that

Ward had to wait till he was thirty-four before he saw the picture which made him realise himself. In 1803 Sir George Beaumont bought Rubens' 'View of the Château de Stein, Autumn.' Ward looked at it for a day and then went away and painted his 'Fighting Bulls at St. Donats' Castle,' now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. A painter who painted after Rubens and whose picture is comparable with the original should not be neglected. Ward was also a fine draughtsman; his drawing of cattle is the best in Colnaghi's current show of Old Masters, while in the Print Room of the British Museum there is a wonderful great horse fighting with a boa constrictor. When Delacroix and Géricault were still boys he was painting animals as fierce and struggling as theirs. At his fitful best James Ward is a painter with the spirit of movement as Rubens, Renoir, Guercino, and Picasso have it, but as no other English artist has had it.

### MUSIC IN LONDON

THE recent visit of Paul Hindemith to London has naturally been of cardinal importance in the season's activities, and the new work which he brought with him has enabled us both to follow the fresh paths which his genius is now taking, and to speculate on the possible influence which his development will have on European music of the future. His symphony, *Mathis der Maler*, which was broadcast on December 21st, was an exciting experience, and was hailed with enthusiasm by the handful of listeners who were privileged to be present; upon that vast public, of which these were, of course, a minute proportion, one can at the least guess at, and at the most hope for, the probable effect. It is a work suggested by a triptych in an Alsatian church, representing the Heavenly Choir, the Entombment, and the Temptation of St. Anthony. The music is subtly evocative, and proceeds from the stimulation of an appeal to

# Music

the imagination, rather than from any empirical considerations. Hindemith has now, as ever, no axe to grind, and those unhappy professional grinders who wreak such confusion in plying their unwelcome trade must with Hindemith supply the axe as well as grind it. Unfortunately this necessity has produced a weapon so formidable as to terrify not only the general public, but most of the critics as well; the very fact that Hindemith is moved to compose by no other principles than those of writing good music which will fulfil the function for which it is intended, is transfigured by the over-enthusiastic apologists into a philosophy of extra-musical considerations, built out of words such as 'abstract', 'pure', 'objective', or 'gebrauch'. Like most such conceptions of art, these words contain the over-ripe fruit rather than the seeds of truth.

Of Hindemith's music it can certainly be said that it possesses definite qualities; whether these are virtues or defects, depends upon the point of view. Thus, either it has great power or it is very dry and bloodless; it is amazingly fluent or it is empty and babbling; it has a masterly sense of design, or it is sterile pattern-making. However these qualities strike one, they are appreciable and positive. As to the fundamental processes from which the music springs, however, there can be and is considerable dissension, and various aims and objects are ascribed to the composer by variously minded people. It is unfair to expect any light on the subject from Hindemith other than that which shines so brightly in his music; although some composers, such as Wagner and Stravinsky, act as fervent apologists, even commercial travellers, for their own works, most prefer to remain silent. But even if the silence is as discreet as the apologia are misguided, discretion alone cannot prevent misconceptions arising; and a large crop of well-meaning efforts

to systematize a composer's mind is bound to arise, whether he be of the silent or articulate variety. One drawback of dealing verbally with music is that in the more imaginative quality of words is often a source of considerable confusion, and we must frequently rid ourselves of those very evocative subtleties in which their richness lies. Thus, if Hindemith's music is 'abstract', it is not as is the fourth dimension; if it is 'pure', it is not with the purity of the January lamb. Whatever words we may seek to describe it, *Mathis der Maler* reveals its composer with an ever-growing fund of resource, and with a power and richness of imagination which he has never surpassed. In one sense, Hindemith usually makes small demands of his listeners. He leaves no spaces to be filled out by their own imaginations; his technical procedure appeals directly to the ear; he does not ask for a 'mood' other than intelligent open-mindedness. It has the quality, appreciable by many people, and glibly acknowledged by everyone, of being exceedingly 'well-made'; Hindemith possesses a very fine technique.

This hazy generalization is for the most part completely incomprehensible to the general public, which has the vaguest possible idea of what the technique of composition in fact is. This is not strange, since although the technique of piano-playing or singing is, within certain limits, an appreciable element in the art of music, even the practitioner himself cannot say with any great precision in what the technical equipment of a composer consists. Like everything else, music cannot well be viewed from every angle at once; and accordingly in teaching it is usually divided up into various points of view encroaching on one another in many particulars, but separately studied for the sake of convenience. Such is the usual round of Harmony, Counterpoint, Form, and so on. As every student must feel, these points of view only touch the

# Films

outermost fringe of the business, and the ability to produce a replica of Orlando Gibbons, or to give a name to the structural members of a Beethoven Sonata, is a meagre equipment for the fashioning of a living piece of music. The technique of composition is a subtler thing than this. It is the process of crystallization of some idea in the composer's mind into sounds which are appreciable by someone else. What that pre-existent 'something' is, we cannot say except in terms of music, and in that medium the composer will tell us with greater or less exactitude, according to whether his technique is efficient or deficient. Accordingly, all efforts to define it in words are not only futile, but unnecessary, since the explanation already exists in music. We may describe our own reactions and sensations; we may, indeed, say a great deal of interest and value about the music itself; but we should never attempt to make a direct appeal to the composer's mind, instead of through the music, which is its reflection.

Therefore, when regarding Hindemith as a fine technician, we mean that over and above an ability to fit notes together in an interesting way, we can find in his music a more or less perfect reflection of something that is in his mind, which we can accordingly accept or reject as we feel disposed.

## ON THE SCREEN

AT the close of the year when everyone is playing the stocktaking game of 'What were the best films of 1934' and while *Man of Aran* is being handed gold medals and being congratulated in several languages, it is interesting to turn and speculate on the possibility of some innovation in the technique of film-making. For five years there has been little change in this very modern form of entertainment, though there has been great improvement in all branches of the industry. In some technical matters it is hard to see what improve-

ments are possible; even the production of sound is now very much better. But talkies have remained talkies, the sound picture has never developed as it was predicted it would do, and extravagance more often than economy has given certain films the reputation of being something new.

It is only reasonable to suppose, therefore, that some vital change is liable to take place in the near future. This modern form of entertainment which caters for millions in every country, particularly as those millions are catered for simultaneously, must do something sensational at intervals to keep alive. Certain forms of entertainment can get the effect of change by reverting to some phase in their development and elaborating on it; but the screen is too young, it has nothing to revert to apart from the silent picture. It will be many years before that can be used again to startle the world.

We must look amongst new inventions and rumours of new inventions for the future of the film. Television is already upon us, the first television theatre in this country has been built during the last twelve months, but there is every reason to believe that there are certain fundamental handicaps to be overcome before its effect on the cinema will be felt. In any case, it would presumably be revolutionary in the serving up of film entertainment rather than in the actual making of films. It might, however, cause a much-needed simplification of our present method of telling a story. It is difficult to see how a television corporation could afford to rent films, costing hundreds of thousands of pounds to make, on any licence basis which would be in any way practical. The stereoscopic film is, we are told, an accomplished fact which would cause a revolution in the cinematic world. An 80-ft. screen, showing distance and perfect reproduction of objects, standing

# Letters

out in solid form, is somewhat startling to contemplate. The cost, however, is also startling. To switch the whole industry over to this new technique would entail scrapping all paraphernalia now in use and refitting entirely down to the smallest detail. Clearly the people in possession of these patents can make more by supressing them than exploiting them for some time to come

What is there left that might happen to films of 1935? One thing only – the introduction of colour. Colour is not exactly new in films, but it is quite likely that in a very short time the black-and-white film will be as difficult to find as the silent film is difficult to find to-day. So far colour films have usually been short and more or less done as a stunt to demonstrate the various colour systems in use. For various reasons there have been practical difficulties, which have prevented the general use of colour in studios. Now it seems fairly certain that colour has not only been improved but has been brought within practical limits. This is rather an alarming prospect. The first year or so of this colour photography is likely to contain a great number of crude specimens amongst its output in the same way that the talkie did, but they will be a tremendous financial success. Judging by the coloured picture postcards for sale in thousands at our holiday resorts, it is difficult to believe that the cinema-going public, of this country at any rate, have any colour sense. On the other hand, these same cards prove that they like colour, for colour's sake. It seems more than likely that coloured films may be of great value to the theatre; indeed, they might put the provincial theatre on its feet again. There must be a number of people in every cinema audience, particularly in the provinces, who have been captured from the theatre-going public. These people, people with more discrimination, will fly in panic from the first

coloured abortions which will inevitably appear on the screen. And so it would appear that 1935 may see the commencement of coloured films in mass, increased revenues to the film industry, but also a boom in the theatre.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The University,  
Edmund Street,  
Birmingham.

*December 15th, 1934.*

SIR,

I am preparing for publication, with the approval of his executors, a memoir of the late Stephen MacKenna, the Neoplatonic scholar, together with a portion of his journal and a selection of his letters. I should be grateful if those who have correspondence or biographical material would send it to me at 6 Sir Harry's Road, Birmingham 15, when it will be copied and returned to them. Anything which throws light on Mr. MacKenna's early life will be especially welcome.

E. R. DODDS.

57 Doughty Street,  
London, W.C. 1.

*December 12th, 1934.*

DEAR SIR,

I am editing for the Hogarth Press a volume of extracts designed to show the Bronte family as seen by their contemporaries. It is, of course, understood that these extracts in all probability will have appeared in print before, but if any of your readers could refer me to some of the less well-known references in contemporary memoirs or correspondence I should indeed be grateful.

Yours truly,

E. M. DELAFIELD.

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# Life and Letters

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# Life and Letters

February 1935

## Affairs of Men

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### *IN EUROPE NOW*

WHAT will the aeroplanes do now? Opinions about the virtue and effectiveness of the agreement between France and England will depend, no doubt, partly on what we think of the chances of the German acceptance of the Anglo-French pact. Its value, however, ultimately must be found in quite other categories than those which control this or similar international agreements. Is the spirit behind these pacts a spirit of friendship, of peace and of genuine amity, or is it the spirit of panic? Mr. MacDonald, in a speech rather above the level of his more recent utterances – few Prime Ministers have made the task of self-improvement so easy – hails the agreement as a great step taken towards the disenfranchisement of war. He is indubitably sincere: but those who admit his sincerity may yet question his intelligence and his insight. Warfare by air, even if one believes only a hundredth part of the horrors predicted by such vaticinators as Lord Halsbury, is an exceptionally crazy and unpleasant form of national suicide – under any conditions. The only sensible policy is to forbid by international agreement

and under the scrutiny of an effective League Control, any such lethal weapon. If the signatories of the Locarno pact enter on further limitation of air-warfare with the honest purpose of ultimate abolition, the future is hopeful. There is no hope, however, to be had from an agreement, however widely signed, that an aggressive air-raid on one country will immediately summon three, four, five or six other countries to deal out reprisals on the aggressor. What comfort would it be to the inhabitants of a bombed and poisoned London or Paris to know that next day there would be a poisoned and bombed Berlin or Rome? Would the funerals in Athens be any cheerier if the survivors knew that the mourning procession would be joined, ere it reached the cemetery, by corpse-laden coaches from Stamboul?

\* \* \*

It is foolish, however, to represent the agreement reached between Monsieur Flandin, Monsieur Laval and Mr. MacDonald and Sir John Simon as yet another instance of the fatal charm of *La Belle France* on those British statesmen who happen to know a little of the

## Affairs of Men

language and think of France as a week-end from home. True enough, that view of our ancient enemy-ally has too often prevailed in the past; but there are few signs of its presence here. To begin with, the Versailles Treaty, so far as it affects Germany's right to armed equality, is jettisoned: that is a huge gain. It is true it would have been far better had we attained the same end by reducing our armaments instead of giving the permission to Germany to increase hers. But still disarmament may come now. Prohibition never yet produced sobriety, and always breeds a self-righteous sense of aggrieved animosity. Secondly, and this is most important, France has abandoned her claim to demand assistance in circumstances where she herself would refuse to give it. The new pact is definitely reciprocal: and if once the principle of reciprocity is generally established over Europe, it is only a small, if difficult, step up to a position when the nations admit the fact that to attack a neighbour is to injure oneself.

\* \* \*

At the time of writing there is nothing definite from Germany about the agreement. It is at least a cause for gratitude that there has been no repudiation or disdain. It is as hard as ever to be certain how far the Nazi Government is troubled by internal dissensions. It looks as though Herr Schacht's position was secure: and that the reign of the early locust-eating prophets and Land-o'-Promise economists were giving place, in the old tiresome way, to the rule of the law and the conventionalists. The result of the Saar plebiscite, which con-

founded all the predictions, has apparently sobered as well as enheartened Herr Hitler and his more reasonable colleagues. There are many explanations forthcoming of the figures. Some say that the voters did not properly understand that, if they elected for the *status quo*, a subsequent return to Germany would still be possible. Others say that, at the great meeting of anti-Nazis (believed to be 50,000 strong) before the voting, the Catholics were disturbed at the character and the violence of their Communist allies. Others again assert that the Pope, believing that if the anti-Nazis were as high as forty per cent., the repercussions on the position of the Church in Germany would be disastrous, requested the clergy to call the Catholics off. It is useless to speculate how far any or all of these reasons played any part. The plain fact is that the vast majority of the Saar-landers are German by blood, language and tradition: and that none of them had lived under the Nazi régime.

\* \* \*

There are rumours of returning Royalties in Germany and Austria. Herr Hitler once more cancelled an appointment which he had arranged with Reich-Bishop Muller—soon surely to be known as Bishop of Matt-and-Doorstep—on the score of important political discussions. The time which was promised to Bishop Muller was then given to the former Crown Prince. It is hard to believe that Herr Hitler thinks his authority would be enhanced if he had in power that particular Hohenzollern; but it is equally difficult to understand how an interview with the Crown Prince,

## Affairs of Men

except as the representative of the late Imperial family, could be described as 'an important political discussion.' Possibly the Crown Prince was merely used as a convenient excuse to avoid a colloquy with the Fuhrer's loyal and ridiculous ecclesiastic. There may be more truth in the gossip that the present Austrian Government is playing with the idea of demanding the return of a Hapsburg. At the worst there has always been a certain dull, dutiful dignity about the Hapsburgs – at least about those who took governing seriously: and a little additional dignity would be an advantage to the rulers of Austria.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile there seems small inclination or power anywhere to deal with the crazy condition of European finance. France and Italy are still diligently preserving what is facetiously called the gold standard. They are like old-fashioned Victorian ladies who, forced by circumstance to abandon the family mansion in Eaton Square, insist on keeping all the old furniture in the flats to which they have retired. It cumbers their activities, and makes the free movement of visitors almost impossible. They are as hospitable as ever, these old ladies, and if visitors can hardly breathe or eat or drink, and bruise themselves as they go about the room, they are grieved, but blame the iniquity of the flat, not the size nor the quantity of the furniture. Italy, it is true, makes more attempt to accommodate the stranger than does France. Railway-travel is extremely cheap for the foreigner. Neither country, however,

will attack the problem at its source. An Italian nobleman said the other day: 'It is a matter of honour. We are too proud to abandon the gold standard: but alas! it is not any longer a gold standard. It is a gilt stamp, and very expensive.'

\* \* \*

February 6th, the anniversary of the riots of last year, passed over without any serious disturbance in Paris. Such demonstrations as did occur were more a matter of organised piety than of spontaneous feeling. Except for the Requiem Mass at Notre Dame, they did not differ essentially from the Parisian outbursts of controversial enthusiasm which make that city so exciting to live in. People who will riot in the concert-hall, in indignant repudiation of a new kind of music, or in the theatre at a character innovation, cannot be expected to refrain from enjoyable agitations on the anniversary of so tragic and needless a disaster as the disturbance of last year.

\* \* \*

There has been curiously little excitement in Europe over the unexpected rebuff administered to President Roosevelt by the Senate. Nor is this surprising. We used, in rather a superior way, to lecture Americans on their selfishness or stupidity in failing to realise that, whatever they wished, it was no longer possible for the United States to keep from European entanglements: that the world was, for all effective purposes, now a unity. How can we keep up that pose of superiority when we in Europe seem increasingly

## Affairs of Men

unwilling to admit that this Continent is a unity? It is to be hoped that those lie who say that the President himself was not sorry at the Senate's rejection of the proposal that the United States should take part in the World Court. Whatever are his feelings about the result of the Senatorial vote, he can scarcely avoid uneasiness at the means by which it was secured. There is general agreement among the more intelligent correspondents in America that the result was due to the activities on the radio of Father Coghlin, Senator 'Huey' Long of Louisiana and to the arguments of the gentleman from California who wishes to solve poverty by the gift of State incomes to the impoverished. Of these men, Long is the most mischievous. A bad cross between Billy Sunday, Barnum and W. J. Bryan, Senator Long is ruling his own State at the point of the shot gun: his answer to opponents is to 'frame' them and gaol them. His rise to power and his retention of power exposes one of the greatest weaknesses of the American constitution – the extreme difficulty that confronts the Federal Government in dealing with a State which runs amok. There should be some proviso by which a State that falls into the hands of brigands could be reduced to a territory and then handled, as Utah, for offences far less heinous than Senator Long's, was handled in the early days of the Mormons.

### AT HOME

ARE Ministers seriously playing with the idea of Press censorship? Fleet Street has been busy speculating on the

meaning of certain Ministerial remarks and apparently inspired statements in some newspapers. That the thought has been in the minds of more than one Minister for some time past is known from their own conversation. Walter Elliot discussed it months ago in the hearing of members of the Press themselves. The Prime Minister, in a recent speech at Newcastle, declared that censorship would involve an attack on liberty such as he could not bring himself to sponsor. The fact that he should have felt it to be worth his while to repudiate the rumour suggests that there was something in it. A correspondence in *The Times* on prying reporters was followed up by a violent letter from the Lord Chief Justice (himself once a journalist), in the course of which he declared that he and some of his friends felt that the time was near at hand when steps would have to be taken to curb the excesses of the Press by legislation. A weekly paper which has lately been supporting the policy of the Prime Minister devoted an article to the same subject. Does all this mean anything, and if so, what?

\* \* \*

No doubt it would suit any Government's book in certain circumstances to be able to restrain criticism, and to compel publicity for given statements. There are many people who believe that it is in ways of this sort – constitutionally, and ostensibly in defence of democratic rights – that England's dose of Fascism is most likely to come. The Press would be wise to recognise the serious abuses within itself and do what it can to reform them before it is compelled to do so from above; but

## Affairs of Men

probably the cause of the trouble is too deep-seated for the cure to be applied from within. The remedy must come, surely, not from censorship of news – which is almost bound to be used for partisan purposes, and anyway implies an attack on freedom of thought and expression – but from fundamental changes in the system of ownership and financial control. Sooner or later this will have to happen.

\* \* \*

Though the popular newspapers often do harm, they can do good when they like. And they generally like in cases where there is suspicion of injustice to the individual. A typical instance of this was the recent inquest at Weymouth which the coroner allowed to be conducted almost as though it were a murder trial, counsel for the police accusing in the plainest terms people against whom no charge had been formulated. The Press was quick to recognise in this procedure a serious threat to justice and to say so in strong language. The result has been the appointment by the Home Office of a Committee to inquire into the coroner system and report whether changes are desirable. The inquiry is welcome, for the Weymouth case was by no means unique. It happens fairly frequently that the police, curbed of other means of extracting information they want from persons they suspect, exploit the medium of an inquest to obtain it, and a weak coroner will let them have their way. But weakness in coroners is not their most common fault. Too often they are inclined to push home their inquiries far beyond the legitimate limits of their function, which is solely to establish

cause of death. In the course of doing so they establish themselves judges of morals and purveyors of would-be wisdom with consequences sometimes very painful to the relatives of the deceased and not infrequently ludicrous to their own dignity. The only way to reform that is to change not the system but the men.

\* \* \*

Censorship of one sort or another seems to be about in the air. Once more the perennial question of film censorship has been raised, a deputation powerful in personnel and wide in representation (headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury) waiting on the Prime Minister to tell him something must be done. But what can be done is not very clear. We should most of us agree that the standard of the cinema is pitifully low, and that its lowness is a danger. But how to raise it? Censorship is not very likely to help, for the reason that there are comparatively few films that are directly and demonstrably indecent. Two forms of censorship exist already, the film industry's own Board and the local authority in each district, and both are singularly ineffective in raising the standard of production. The real menace of the cinema comes from the way in which it persistently exalts the wrong qualities and glorifies the least worthy characteristics – violence, sexual lust, riches, frivolity, not to mention sheer bad taste. Against this no censorship, short of total prohibition, can hope to be effective.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile a movement which may develop into a serious menace to the best kind of film needs careful

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watching. Recently the police of a town in Tyneside prosecuted a local miners' hall for exhibiting a 'non-flam' sub-standard film of the well-known Soviet picture *Potemkin*. The police lost their case and were ordered to pay costs. They have since requested the magistrates to state a case, which puts this particular matter *sub judice* and precludes further comment on it. But the general issue is of the wider importance. Sub-standard films (small size films used extensively for educational and cultural purposes) are almost all of what is called 'non-flam' material. The authorities are now claiming that non-flam is in fact inflammable and must be forbidden in the interest of public safety. It is admittedly slightly more combustible than the standard film used for ordinary cinema exhibition, but the worst it can do is to smoulder, and experts declare that it cannot be considered dangerous. If use of this type of film were to be prohibited an extremely damaging blow would be struck at the film as a medium of education. Unfortunately the suspicion persists that the movement for prohibition is not actuated by a single-minded devotion to the bodily safety of the public, but has also a commercial and even perhaps a political subplot.

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It is taking a long time to kill the tradition that an amateur is a gentleman and that a professional, being a base person who plays for money, is unfit for the company of amateurs. But bit by bit the thing is happening. The democratic influence of Australia finally killed the snobbish nonsense of 'gentle-

men' and 'players' issuing from separate doors in the pavilion. Now the latest decision of the Lawn Tennis Association has blown the whole principle sky-high so far as concerns lawn tennis. An amateur may remain an amateur, declares the L.T.A., though he earn money by displaying his prowess on the films. If, however, he descends to the ignominy of earning money by teaching his craft he is degraded to the rank of professional, as in the past. Whether the fact that as a film star he is likely to earn big money, whereas the rewards of teaching remain small, had anything to do with this snobbish decision the Association has not divulged. The change has been made, of course, in an attempt to keep Perry an amateur for the Davis Cup matches. The price paid means an early and welcome end to an absurdly obsolete convention.

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Among people who have some knowledge of what British artists and designers can do there is a general opinion that the Art in Industry Exhibition at Burlington House is a spectacular 'flop.' For one thing the exhibits are badly or timidly displayed; for another, far too many of the goods chosen for exhibition are themselves not representative examples of the best we are producing. Where the show is not old-fashioned and conventional it has fallen a victim to vulgarity or the merely fashionable – and the fashion of an expensive and stunt convention. What is perhaps worse from the point of view of an exhibition that foreigners naturally regard as our national shop-window,

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many of the things we design best in this country are represented meagrely or not at all. There is known to have been a good deal of dissatisfaction behind the scenes, and rumour has it that more than one exhibitor was only prevented with difficulty from withdrawing. The whole thing is a bad let down for British design, and by consequence – if they only realised it – a bad let down also for the manufacturers, whose heavy hands have left their mark all over the Exhibition.

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Space having run out, the Parliamentary manœuvres of the month must be relegated to a political 'omnibus.' A period interrupted almost completely by the Christmas recess has been mainly notable for four things: India, Overcrowding, Unemployment Assistance, and the indefatigable Transport Minister's announcement of a five-year plan for English roads. The India Bill is the longest

ever presented to Parliament, and the debates that have followed are appropriate to that length. The result is a certainty from the start, despite a diversion by the diehards in running Randolph Churchill as an India Defence League candidate for Waver-tree, where he managed to keep out the official Conservative. The Housing Bill has been treated kindly by the experts and seems to make a big effort to get to grips with the problem, though a standard of overcrowding which allows the regular use of a living room for sleeping plainly falls some way below the ideal. As for the new rates of public assistance under the centralized committee, they caused a storm of dissatisfaction in which Members from all parts of the House (as well as visitors to the public gallery) joined. The Government had to beat a hasty retreat, and has promised a revised scale, more in keeping with the social conscience of all parties. Meanwhile the cuts have been restored.

# A Christian Philosophy

by Edwyn Bevan

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A REMARKABLE book published between three and four years ago in Germany by the Tubinger philosopher, Karl Heim (*Glaube und Denken*) opens with the statement: "Theories-about-the-Universe (*Weltanschauungen*) have had their day. All the battles about those protective coverings (*Gehäuse*), in which former generations sought shelter, as in comfortable habitations, and defended like fortresses against attack, are fought and done. For us, men of to-day, it is not only faith in one particular theory of the universe which has gone – the theory, for instance, characteristic of eighteenth-century "Enlightenment," or Materialism, or Monism. Our mistrust has become deeper. We doubt whether it is possible to comprehend the huge riddle of Reality in the midst of which we find ourselves placed, which presses in upon us from all sides, in any one picture at all, any picture before which we can take station, which we can describe and contemplate and pass on to other men, as a chart to guide them on the journey of life."

The writer of the book just quoted

<sup>1</sup> *Nature, Man and God: being the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in the Academical Years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934*, by Wilham Temple, Archbishop of York—Macmillan 18/-

from obviously does not regard this habit of mind as irremediable, since the rest of his book puts forward a theory of the universe which he must hope that other men will find serviceable as a guide. But his description of the existing state of things we can recognize as too true. Even to-day, of course, there are various theories of the universe put forward by living philosophers of eminence, such as Professor Whitehead, or Professor S. A. Alexander, or by one but recently dead, J. E. MacTaggart. But while these theories have excited widespread interest and discussion, none of them unites any large body of men in common belief. Only the beliefs upon which Christian philosophical schemes are built still command the adherence of a large number of people on the high, as well as on the low, levels of intellectual culture, and so long as Christian philosophy in this way survives, the prediction that it will soon succumb to the same lethal atmosphere which has destroyed its former rivals is a guess about the future which may be falsified by the event.

So far as any view of the universe is sound, the most effective way of recommending it to others is to set it forth as a whole. In the year that is just over, one man, William, Arch-



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bishop of York, has put before our generation in a book what the universe looks like to *him*. There it is, a personal testimony, for other men to make of whatever they think fit. It will be on record. In the year of our Lord 1934, the activity of men's minds about the problematic universe surrounding them having reached the conclusions they had done up to that moment of time, the sequence of experiences in the Christian communities having been what they had been throughout nineteen centuries, in the midst of much bewilderment and confusion of belief, so did a man who certainly had a more than common knowledge of the thought and scientific results of his day, and who no less certainly had been immersed in the life of the Christian society, put before his contemporaries with admirable clearness and conviction what the final result in his own mind was of all that had impinged upon it, from the natural world around, from the manifold life of men, from present and past, from, as he himself believed, the voice and touch of God. There is one suggestion which could be emitted only by people completely obtuse in their judgment of men – that William Temple defends the view he does because he has some interest, other than that of loyalty to truth, in getting it accepted. The idea that in this case 'vested interests' come in could provoke only mirth in anyone who has the slightest ability to distinguish the different qualities of living men. You may think him wrong, but to doubt the clear honesty of his reading of the universe would be absurd. He is, it is true, Archbishop of York; but he became Archbishop

because he held such a view as this; he does not hold the view because he is Archbishop.

It may seem odd that when he wants to find a name for his theory of the universe he should claim for it a special affinity with that of Marx and Lenin: he suggests that his theory might be called Dialectical Realism, as theirs is called Dialectical Materialism. One wonders, indeed, whether there really is any other affinity between William Temple's philosophy and theirs, than that both lay stress on the real existence of matter and on the distinction between matter and mind, and so are both opposed to anything like Berkeleian Idealism. To this extent, however, they both correspond with the ordinary 'common sense' view, and the special point of Dialectical Materialism, that mind is always secondary and dependent upon matter, is one which the whole philosophy of William Temple is directed to deny.

There is a notable contrast between the theory of the universe set forth in this volume, and another type of philosophy we have known, which also claims to be a Christian one – the type which, on Platonic or neo-Platonic lines, minimizes the importance of Time. It is the moving process of the Universe which engages William Temple's interest, and here he is at one with the tendency of modern thought, to which Natural Science and History have given stimulus and direction. He sees himself set in a world of material things and events, and believes, with modern science, that through untold ages the process went on with nothing composing it but material things and

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events. Then at a particular point of time minds came into being. When once the minds were there, they acted in the peculiar way minds do, as distinguished from material processes; they acted – at any rate, when the level of mammalian life had been reached – under two kinds of impulse, desire and affection. Desire, being for things that gave pleasure, was attracted by the qualities of things – if by the particular sweet thing, not by it as an individual, but as something which possessed the general quality of sweetness; affection – that of parent for offspring, or of offspring for parent – was directed to the individual. Animal desire was the germ of what in man became conceptual knowledge, science concerned with the general qualities of things; animal affection was the germ of what in man became Art, love of the individual beauty. But man, pursuing, conceptual knowledge, finds that the world is such as to meet this exigence of his mind; similarly, pursuing beauty, he finds that the world offers him beautiful things. That is to say, in Truth and in Beauty, he finds in the world an expression of mind, akin to his own mind. There is in Truth and Beauty a note of authority; they are not simply discovered by man; they command his reverence. This is what is meant by calling Truth and Beauty two great ‘values.’ But they are not absolute Values, because they are subordinate to a still higher Value, Goodness. This one Absolute Value implies a peculiar sense of obligation, and obligations have their sphere in relations between persons. No code can define particular modes of action obligatory at all times and in all circum-

stances: the only universal obligation is expressed in the law ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’

So far we have been tracing simply the way minds have behaved and felt since they made their surprising appearance at a point of the material universe which for untold millions of millions of years had gone on in its vast expanse without them. But for William Temple it is not possible to rest simply in accepting the bare fact: they just appeared, and that is all you can say about it. Minds could not have come into being with no cause at all, and anything so different from matter could not have resulted from mere collocations of matter. Therefore in some way Mind must have been there before; all through those untold ages the material process which was going to lead to minds must have been ruled by Mind. The whole material universe must exist by the will of the Supreme Mind. And at present the human mind, when it perceives Value, recognizes, as was said just now, Mind akin to itself in the universe, Mind claiming reverence. The finite minds which have appeared in connexion with material bodies show their nature by subordinating matter to their purposes, by their power of initiating activity: analogously the Supreme Mind is the mover behind all the processes of the material universe. And He must be thought of as adapting these processes to His purpose with the freedom of a Personal Agent. He himself is eternally invariable, but at different moments of the process His mode of action may vary in accord with special conjunctures. The laws discovered by science are thus only the usual modes of God’s

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working: what is called a miracle is an exceptional mode, but it is not an irruption of God's power into a process which otherwise goes on without Him the ordinary process and the miraculous occurrence are equally and alike the activity of the One Spirit carrying out His purpose all through with perfect consistency.

We come to the question of Revelation. If God works in all the processes of the universe, everything that is and happens must to some degree reveal Him. But this leaves it possible to regard particular events and persons as revealing Him more richly than others. The Archbishop here insists that revelation is not the supernatural dictation of verbal propositions uttered or written down by particular persons, such as it is conceived to be by those who hold a view of scriptural inspiration formerly general among Christians, and still adhered to by the largest Christian communion which looks for its doctrine to Rome – a view held also by Moslems in regard to the Koran, and by many Hindus in regard to the Vedas. 'No single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of an authentic utterance of the All-Holy God' (page 350). No: Revelation, as William Temple has come to understand it, consists in there entering into the time-process, on the one side, certain persons who, just by being what they are, reveal more of God than ordinary people, or in certain events occurring of peculiar significance, and there being, on the other side, men whose spiritual discernment is quickened by special illumination, so that they can apprehend the significance of those persons and events,

and make it known to others. 'There is no such thing,' the Archbishop boldly says, 'as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation, that is to say, propositions which express the results of correct thinking concerning revelation; but they are not themselves directly revealed' (page 317). 'Specific Revelation, if it exists at all,<sup>1</sup> is revelation of God, not of propositions about God; and God is not a concept' (page 350). 'The prophets were not Gifford Lecturers with the advantage of some special "guidance"' (page 340).

The revelation of God in persons and events comes to each individual through the tradition of the religious community, but its acceptance by the individual is of worth only when the individual sees for himself the significance of the persons and events presented to him. So far as any man simply accepts something, the truth of which he does not see, in reliance on some authority deemed infallible, his acceptance is worth little. 'In whatever degree reliance upon such infallible direction comes in, spirituality goes out' (page 353). But William Temple recognizes – it is important to note this – that it is not necessarily a reproach to a man that he should have unshakable assurance in the rightness of his Church: only such assurance is a kind of personal trust and is not to be identified with infallible knowledge.

For any theistic view of the universe the difficult problems all spring from the root-difficulty of finding any rational explanation

<sup>1</sup> "If it exists at all" does not, of course, imply any doubt in the Archbishop as to its existing, but is obviously thrown in in order to conform with the terms of the Gifford Trust, which forbids a lecturer to assume that a revelation does exist.

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how independent finite wills can co-exist with a Divine universal will – the problem of evil, the problem of salvation by Grace, the problem of prayer, are all outcomes of that one deep-lying difficulty. The way William Temple deals with these problems will therefore be a crucial part of his theory. When there were minds there on the human level, he shows these were determined in their action by their apparent good. Minds at the merely animal level had been self-centred and reacted instinctively to environment. But when once a creature had come into being who had knowledge of good and evil, he was capable of conceiving a good which was other than the gratification of himself. In remaining therefore now merely self-centred, he was acting against an inner light; self-centredness became self-assertion. The knowledge of good and evil in which, according to the old myth in Genesis, the fall of man consisted, thus really did create the possibility of sin, as it created the possibility of goodness. This new creature might, if he had chosen, not have taken the direction of sin; he might have given up his self-centredness to follow the real good. But man's making the wrong, easy choice was 'too probable not to happen,' so that God with full knowledge of the likelihood, as an episode necessary to the Divine plan, called into being a creature almost certain to turn to evil, though it would be untrue to say that God made man selfish, or predestined him to sin. The whole process of human society throughout the centuries has accentuated and extended the self-centredness, and thereby the sinfulness

of men: it is not simply a case of reason failing to control inherited animal impulses: human personality at its centre is set wrong. It is the spirit itself which is evil, though 'those mystics are probably right who hold that in every soul there is a divine spark which never consents to sin' (page 372).

It is this condition of mankind which brings into action God's will to save. Man cannot by his own effort escape from his self-centredness: only a call from without can deliver him. A partial escape, indeed, is found in such response as man gives to the claims of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, but what is wanted is a more thorough shifting of the personality from its centre in self, to become centred in God. If self remains the centre, then, even although the circle of my interest should be extended so wide as to include God, I have not yet attained salvation. 'He is for me, my God, not God whose I am.' The shifting can be brought about only by the act of God. Yet equally it must be man's free choice, for it would not accord with God's character to effect it by an exertion of power which nullified man's freedom. A free choice can be determined by the appeal of love, by that alone. 'The one hope then of bringing human selves into right relationship to God is that God should declare His love in an act, or acts, of sheer self-sacrifice, thereby winning the freely offered love of the finite selves which He has created.' Whether God, as a fact, has or has not done this a Gifford Lecturer is not at liberty to say, but William Temple need not tell us in regard to this what he believes.

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The individual, once centred in God, finds the right line of action determined for him by the unique place which belongs to him in an all-embracing commonwealth of persons, each one fulfilling his or her special vocation, realizing values which cannot be realized quite in that way by any other personality. The life of this universal society, which has its centre and ground in God, is what is meant by eternal life, and it can reach its perfection only beyond the conditions of life in this world. There is, however, the time-process in this world, and this is carrying out a great drama which God has projected and controls. But because the actors in it are free agents, God Himself 'does not know beforehand exactly how they will respond to the various modes of His manifestation to them.' One may note here that the question whether the Divine omniscience implies that God knows beforehand what the choices of free agents are going to be is a standing problem in the philosophy of religion. One other Gifford Lecturer, at any rate, James Ward, took the view taken by William Temple – that God does *not* know. William Temple believes that Time enters into the life of God in a way which would be abhorrent to the theology of Dr. Inge. God is disappointed when men choose wrong, and does not know after how long a roll of ages the general response of mankind which will give Him full sovereignty will be made. Yet William Temple believes that God has an eternal experience which is not successive, beside His temporal experience. In His eternal being He can suffer no change, but the historical events in

which God manifests Himself do make a difference to Him in the sense that if they had not occurred God would have been other than He is. Human life, however, on this planet must come to an end some day, and if the ultimate destiny of the human race is utter annihilation, the whole process is marked with futility. 'It is sheer lack of imagination to suppose that a vista of a million million years can give more significance than a week or a fortnight to our moral strivings, if at the end it is all to be as though we had never been at all.' 'It is an intuition of Religion at its deepest that History moves to a climax which is historical because it occurs in, and crowns, the course of History, but which is in its own nature a transition to a new order of experience.'

What conception, then, have we ground for forming about the destiny of men, when they pass at death, out of this sphere of things? That there should be experimental proof of man's survival of death, William Temple thinks 'positively undesirable.' He very much hopes that Psychical Research will never arrive at any but dubious results. This is because, so long as man's desire is simply for his personal survival or for reunion with his friends, it is not religious. The really religious desire must be first for God's glory. The righteousness and love of God do indeed, William Temple holds, imply human immortality. But the soul is not naturally immortal, as Plato apparently believed (though Plato makes Timaeus affirm that God alone is immortal in His own right and that He bestows on individual souls an immortality which is not theirs by

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nature). And the Christian hope is something quite different from the mere continuance of a man's personality as he was on earth. It means transformation, translation into a new order of being, so that the brief life in Time is seen as 'a subordinate and essentially preparatory moment in the eternal Reality.' 'The Christian doctrine is a doctrine, not of Immortality, but of Resurrection' (page 461). By this, however, William Temple does not appear to mean a resurrection of the body at the Last Day, but the transformed state of being into which an individual here in fellowship with God passes at death. And what about those who pass out of life in a state of alienation from God? A Christian must believe in some sense in the reality of Hell. William Temple suggests that, 'objectively regarded, Heaven and Hell may well be identical.' The same conditions of nearness to God which to the godly and unselfish soul are joy unspeakable, may be misery to the selfish soul. If man is free to choose, the possibility cannot be ruled out that a soul may utterly and finally reject the love of God and end in 'an agony of self-diremption,' 'a torture of moral insanity.' But such an end to a human person would be a failure on the part of God. Therefore William Temple holds to the hope that in the end the Grace of God, which is His love made known, will win its way into every human heart. He recognizes that men's wrong choices must for all eternity have 'abiding consequences,' as Baron von Hügel used to insist. But although nothing can ever make the evil acts not to have been done, their value may become transformed,

if they are made the occasion for penitence and for the appropriation of the redemption offered by divine Love. Thus it is possible to hold, without demoralizing consequences, that in the end 'every soul which God has made shall thank Him for every tittle of its experience.'

When we come back from this straining of vision into the ultimate beyond to the material world in which we find ourselves placed, to the politics and economics of the transient day, we find the right valuation of this environment, when we acknowledge, on the one hand, the supremacy and eternity of Spirit and, on the other hand, the reality of matter which Spirit uses as its vehicle and controls for its own purposes. For such a view of the world William Temple claims the term 'sacramental.'

In his final lecture William Temple returns to the great difficulty in any Theistic view of the universe – the existence of evil, and in especial moral evil, which consists in the self-centredness of the persons making up the human world. Incidentally, he intimates his own belief that Satan has real existence and that a large share of the responsibility for the evil we see in the world belongs to him and to subordinate evil spirits (though there must be some good in Satan, he says in a footnote, or he could not exist at all). This is interesting as showing how the strong independence of William Temple's mind refuses to be intimidated by current unreflecting judgments. It ought surely to be plain that if you once admit the existence of any personal spirits other than those now animating bodies – and everyone

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who believes that human spirits survive death must do this – then to deny the likelihood that the world of unseen spirits contains bad ones as well as good ones has no ground in reason. In any case, the question whether there are evil discarnate spirits or not does not really, as William Temple points out, affect the problem of evil, since it only pushes the question a little farther back, and we still have to ask, Why is the devil wicked?

Supposing that even by the appeal of love, shown in sacrifice, men, as a whole, were drawn from self-centredness to love, it could not, he thinks, be reasonably disputed, that such a result of the process would be so rich in value that the self-centredness 'and all the welter of evil flowing from it' which had marked the process at its outset would not prevent the process as a whole from being regarded as supremely good. But one might admit, he recognizes, as an abstract possibility, that temporary evil might on this supposition be an essential condition for the greatest ultimate good, and still question whether, as a matter of fact, any such process for the justification of evil has been initiated in our world by God. Belief that this is so can rest only on a manifestation of God's love through special acts of His in the time-process, the recognition of which lies outside the competence of Natural Theology. Natural Theology 'can only discuss God; it cannot reveal Him.' Thus, apart from those special acts of God, man would be left only with a spiritual hunger. He might see what the satisfaction of his hunger would be, but it would not be satisfied.

I have tried to compress into these

few pages an account of William Temple's theory of the universe, as it is set forth in the 520 pages of this book. There has been no space to note in passing more than a few of those telling epigrams in which his thought, by a happy and exceptional gift, so often leaps into expression. What are we to say of the theory as a whole? Anyone who comes to it with a view of the world which is already Christian will read the book with, in general, joyful assent and find his own convictions framed in a system of thought through which the significance of some of them will stand out for him in a new way, though, of course, it is true that on particular points William Temple's belief will conflict with those held within this or the other group of the Christian society – here with a doctrine of the Roman Church, there with the old Fundamentalism, there again with Dean Inge's Neoplatonism, there with the desiccated Rationalism which has marked a certain type of Modernists. But it is mainly, no doubt, those who have not hitherto accepted any Christian view of the universe that the book has in mind. How will such a theory stand their scrutiny? I think one must see immediately that the argument involves enormous assumptions. Its starting-point that the emergence of minds in the time-process implies that supreme Mind *must* have been operative in the process from the beginning is not a logical necessity. It is an act of faith that Reality is such as to correspond with man's sense of value. Nothing would be easier for an opponent of the Christian view than to show all through how the argument leaps logical gaps

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on the strength of such a faith. Nothing would be easier and nothing would be cheaper and more futile. For there is no view of the universe which can be proved with logical necessity. Every view which men take as a guide for action involves enormous assumptions, negative ones, if not positive ones, and negative ones may equally turn out to be mistaken. At least this is how most Christians, I believe, who think would defend their faith to-day, outside the Roman Communion; for it is certainly a dogma of that church that the existence of God and the Divine government of the world are capable of being proved by sheer rational necessity, apart from any act of faith or special illumination. Yet the dogma that men, if perfectly rational, would draw the inference has to be qualified by recognition that, in fact, many men who appear to be as rational in other respects as anyone else fail to draw it.

If we allow that William Temple's exposition of his theory of the universe is an utterance of his personal faith, the theory stands there for acceptance or rejection as one among all the other theories which are the expressions of personal faith, unprovable by logic. But while it would be easy for opponents of the Christian view to show gaps in its logical cogency, we may ask whether they could show that at any point it actually conflicts with the established results of modern scientific enquiry? I seem to observe that while attacks on Christianity which show Christian beliefs to be unproved make

out a relatively effective case, attacks which try to show that Christian beliefs are impossible or absurd, or incompatible with scientific knowledge are pitiful in their own weakness; they seem always obliged to fall back on misrepresentation and caricature. With regard to the theory set forth in this book, I do not see that it would conflict at any point with conclusions based on the scientific study of the material world or the human mind. Such doctrines of the Christian Church as, unwisely stated, have furnished points for attack or ridicule, seem here stated in a way which would make a good deal of current off-hand criticism pointless.

I think even an agnostic might admit that, supposing such a view of the universe were the true one, the deliverances of man's spirit in regard to a meaning in the process of time and to the authority of the values which he recognizes would have eminent justification and explanation. The difficulty to-day would be, as we saw at the outset, not that there is any rival theory which affords better justification and explanation, but the widespread indisposition to hold any theory of the universe at all. The leap from admitting the Christian theory to be not impossible to believing it to be true is a great one. Anyone who has made it, if pressed to explain how he came to do so, might be able to give no better answer than that it was the Grace of God.



# Death of a Spartan King

by Jack Lindsay

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THIRTEEN men sat round the long table. They were drinking, leaning back in the chairs or sprawling across the table. One had spilt his wine, but had called no slave to wipe it up. Now one spat at a painting on the wall. There wasn't much else to do. They talked over the battles they had fought together, ready to come to blows. It would be a relief to fight, even among themselves. Thirteen Spartans, shut in a fine house at Alexandria, with nothing to do except amuse themselves. They were desperately bored.

The man who had spat drew himself up somewhat unsteadily and walked across to the painting. No wonder he'd spat. There was a prettified Adonis in the picture, attended by fat Cupids, bowered in roses. Thirteen Spartans, and one of them a king, shut up in a pleasure-house, growing worse-tempered daily. The boy-king of Egypt went his way, arguing about literature, listening to flute-girls, a weakling like the Adonis of the painting; and the best thirteen men inside the boundaries of his kingdom were jailed. Why? Because he was frightened of them. Spit on him.

One of the Spartans sat at the further end of the table with his head in his hands. He was Cleomenes, the

King, and he ruled a dozen good fighters. That was his kingdom now. Twelve strong men in the open, with a Spartan king to lead them, might win a name of power, take a fortress, or at least die worthily. But what use were they cooped up in this Alexandrian mansion, not even in a jail dirty enough to give their stubbornness something on which to exert itself?

Cleomenes sat and thought.

His wife was dead, and his land was lost, and he had done nothing except fight battles year after year, sixteen long years, ending beaten. Where was the flaw? He had brought back Sparta to its ancient discipline. He had dared to tackle the greed for possessions that destroyed the unity of a people. He had abolished wealth and shared out the entire land of the State equally, and for a while Sparta had been strong once more. But there were too many enemies. Not only were there the armies of the enemy without. There was greed in the hearts of the citizens, waiting to creep out into action again.

What was a king unless he was the passion and law of the State incarnated? Was the flaw then his, as well as the strength?

He had fallen, and now he was a

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prisoner in Alexandria, the city of vanities, the city of loose songs and luxurious greeds. It was as things should be, if the end was not to be with the hope of Cleomenes. There must be a flaw somewhere in his hope. Otherwise how had his work failed to awaken a complete response?

And his wife was dead – Agiatis with the brave blue eyes, who had warmed his heart for the conflict. Yet the end was not now. For his heart would break if she had lived and died vainly, bearing his third child.

His face became bleak once more, and he raised his head, calling for wine. It did not matter how much he drank, it would not affect him.

Hippitas, the eldest man there, looked up from the treatise on philosophy, tucked under his chin, which he was unrolling. He looked round at his companions – good fellows, a little rowdy, but true to the bone. Hippitas had taken to reading since they settled at Alexandria; he was feeling his age. It was difficult to read with the noise breaking in on philosophy. Yet, after all, what would the philosophy be if there was no noise to break in on it? All arguments seemed to lack something. They couldn't explain the noise. Perhaps someday the noise and the argument would become one, and the lack would cease.

Something lacking. How explain the suffering nobility in the face of Cleomenes that dragged at the heart of Hippitas every time he looked?

Therucion and Panteus had begun to sneer at one another.

'What does a jailed man want with a wife? Is Egypt so short of slaves?'

'A wager, Therucion! All that I own is yours if I fail to knock your front teeth in with one blow of the back of my hand.'

Cleomenes turned to them.

'Silence.'

There was no anger in his voice, only a tense melancholy. The brawlers looked at him with shame in their eyes. Cleomenes spoke again.

'We found no test of our spirits when we fought in Hellas. Here is our test.'

Therucion gulped at his wine, blinked, and spoke in low fierce tones.

'I warned you not to come to Egypt. I knew we'd get nothing for our pains. I knew this court of Alexandria would only lie and hang us up and lead us on and then betray us. Didn't I speak the truth?'

'Yes,' said Cleomenes, 'you spoke the truth.'

'Then you admit we shouldn't have come.'

'I admit no such thing.'

Cleomenes grasped his cup of carved cedar so tightly that the wood cracked.

'I'm sick of it all,' said Therucion. 'I'm going to make my peace with the boy-king and get some of the land that's going. My bones are weary.'

'Get out, then,' said Cleomenes in a dull heavy voice, without looking up.

'I'm going. Yes, I am,' went on Therucion doggedly.

'Get out then,' shouted Cleomenes, standing at last. He strode across to Therucion, grasped him by the shoulders, lifted him from his seat, and flung him staggering towards the door.

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Therucion crashed against the doorpost, scowled, and went out.

'Does anyone else want to go?' asked Cleomenes, calm once more, speaking with his withdrawn voice. 'Go with the right tale to Sosibios and you'll be welcomed.'

'You know we won't go,' said Panteus, a tall youth with yellow hair. 'Don't be angry with Therucion. He didn't mean what he said.'

Cleomenes sat again at the head of the table.

'But what's the use of it all?' continued Panteus haltingly. 'Can't we make our peace somehow with these people and get out of Egypt?'

'Or make our peace and stay?' said Pausias, a middle-aged man. 'I've had a look at the way they run their industries, and I see that though our ideas in Sparta were very fine, they won't work in the world as things are. People want someone to look after them, not to be free citizens.'

Cleomenes made no answer to either man. He sank his head again upon his hands.

Panteus said no more, thinking of his young wife upstairs, the truest girl that ever gave her heart to a man. She had broken away from her parents, fled on horseback, bribed a trading-captain to carry her to Alexandria, and there joined Panteus. Yet he had been able to make her no return. Dear Rhodope, what could he give her that would repay? He had asked her once and she had cried, 'Don't you understand? I have everything, having you. I can fear nothing while you live; and when you die, I die. You have given me everything.' He didn't quite understand. Love of a woman

made things difficult. He couldn't follow Cleomenes with the singleness of obedience that had been his in the old days. That was weakness. He must not cling to life because it had now become so unutterably enriched. So much the greater gift he had to give to the purpose speaking through Cleomenes.

Therucion entered with bowed head

'I can't go and you know I can't go.'

He wept. Cleomenes took no notice of him, but leant forwards with his head in his hands.

'Come and sit down,' said Panteus, no longer angry with Therucion. 'He knows you love him.'

Therucion took his seat and greedily gulped some wine, glowering round to intercept any smiles. But the others were subdued. Hippitas found that he could not concentrate on the letters of ink running neatly across the roll. The letters were too neat, the writer's style too fluent. Life was so full of breaks; and yet it had its sweep and eloquence. It was easy to see the points where the effort of Cleomenes to abolish private property had failed; but there must also be a point where it succeeded, despite everything. Otherwise, how explain the greatness in the eyes of Cleomenes? What was failure?

Panteus approached Cleomenes and laid a hand on his shoulder, speaking in a soft voice which the others could not catch.

'Must we all die?'

Cleomenes looked at him with darkened eyes, then smiled sadly.

'Do you love her very much?'

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'As my life.'

'Then take her and go. I have nothing to give you both.'

'But there is something I love more than my life. You know I cannot go. And yet at times I lose heart.'

The face of Cleomenes hardened, grew bleak again.

'When you have utterly lost your heart, then you will find it. We must follow where the God leads us.'

'And if no God leads me — only love of a woman and love of a man?'

Cleomenes sat silent. Then he spoke more gently. 'God spoke to me through the mouth of a woman once. If God speaks to you through my mouth, then you must follow. Otherwise go. There is nothing to stop you.'

The heart of Panteus weakened with pity and love for the woman who had come so far to find him. He had given her so little, whatever she said. But he couldn't leave Cleomenes.

Cleomenes went on speaking, addressing the whole group.

'Justice must yet rule the world. Our failure was nothing. I see the truth of it all sometimes. God suffers, and that is why we fail. But God is Justice, and Justice will yet rule the world. It is hard to understand. Sometimes it is very easy. I do not know. But whether it is hard or easy, it is all the same to me. I must go on. I ask no one to go with me, unless he also is compelled to go. God has many voices . . .'

His words dwindled away and he sat staring across the room, forgetting the twelve men who were now all his kingdom.

A slave entered to announce Ptolemaios, son of Chrusermas. The Spartans stirred. Anything was a welcome diversion for men in their condition, even a visit from one of the courtiers. Panteus noticed with a slight jealousy that Cleomenes was pleased; then he rose and went out to join his wife upstairs.

Cleomenes was pleased. He liked youth in its strength and grace; and Ptolemaios was an athlete, even if his father was one of the worthless favourites of the boy-king Philopator. Some day all the world would be strong and graceful.

Therucion had regained his spirits and was trying to put his finger through an apple with a single thrust. The others were mocking and encouraging him. Hippitas, irritable and lame, had withdrawn to the side where light streamed through a small high window, and was reading the roll, moving his lips and screwing up his eyes.

The Spartans greeted Ptolemaios with a shout and surrounded him, chafing.

'Look at the embroideries on his tunic. Why, we'll have him carrying a parasol next. What's the news from the world?'

'It's all very well for you old campaigners to jeer,' laughed Ptolemaios. 'But you forget that we've ceased to be bloodthirsty in this part of the earth. We export corn and glassware instead of going to war.'

Cleomenes said nothing. There was a wisdom in what the boy said. But the reign of peace was not yet come. A man must fight for the truth, and justice alone could dictate the terms on which the reign of peace

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would arrive; justice, not a profiteering Philopator.

Ptolemaios shook off the others and seated himself beside Cleomenes.

'It's ridiculous, this imprisonment. Something will have to be done about it. My father's doing his best. But the King's so busy.'

He made a wry face.

'The flute-girls make too much noise,' said Cleomenes, nodding his head. He took the hand of Ptolemaios kindly. 'Tell me your thought of it all? Is it your idea of justice that the tinklings of a dancer's bangles should be louder than the voice of righteousness?'

'I could listen to you all day,' said Ptolemaios half-earnestly, half-gaily. 'But what would happen to me if I did? Already you've spoiled me for a court-career. Yesterday I tweaked the ear of a eunuch, and he squeaked; and I believe the reverberation has already gone through six state-departments. No doubt after the requisite nine hundred and ninety-nine documents have been signed, countersigned, and docketed, I'll be banished, fined, or made to attend all the court-parties on compulsion. See what you've done to me?'

Cleomenes smiled.

'This is a rich land, Egypt. Unlike my native land of Sparta. Rich in wheat and barley, and herbs, and plough-oxen, and flax and papyrus-reed, I mean. It could feed and clothe the hungry world, my friend. It is a pity that it feeds only a drunken boy and his mistress.'

Ptolemaios put his fingers to his ears. 'Treason,' he whispered. 'Beware of your over-trustful tongue,

Cleomenes, King of Sparta. It will lead you into mischief. All who listen do not love you as I do.'

He rose and began betting with the others. He said that he could clear the table, and challenged the Spartans to beat him. Amphares, the youngest Spartan, felt put on his mettle, and took up the challenge. The two youths kicked off their sandals, stripped, and drew lots. Amphares had to jump first. He ran up the room, jumped, and managed to clear the table, but not without landing awkwardly and twisting his ankle. It was then the turn of Ptolemaios. Taking a much shorter run, he came lightly up and cleared the table with ease.

The Spartans could not hide the displeasure on their faces, but Cleomenes applauded loudly, determined to force his men out of their ungenerous attitude. Amphares, limping, approached Ptolemaios and grasped his forearm in friendly homage, and the others lost their discontent. They came crowding round, lifted Ptolemaios upon the table, and presented him with a silver goblet of wine.

'If this house was mine,' said Cleomenes, 'I'd tell you to take the cup. But since we are here as penniless guests, we can offer you only the wine of our jailer. But no matter from whose cask it came, it was the Sun's gift first.'

'I drink to the Sun,' said Ptolemaios with a bow, 'and to Cleomenes. I drink to the free earth of Dionusos.'

The Spartans clamorously filled their cups, and drank; and Cleomenes also drank, thinking not of himself as part of the toast, but only of the free

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spirit of life uttering itself equally in sunlight and human energy, and yet fettered, gnarled to evil ends. Nothing became what it set out to be.

He looked up to see that Ptolemaios was saying good-bye. He liked the youth, his gaiety and athletic grace. Thus will the whole world be when children are born smiling. Was it all helpless? Yet if one individual could attain a gracious happiness, so could all.

A great love for all men overcame him, even for the tipsy boy-king who had shut him up. So little was needed to set the world on the right path, to unclasp the strangling fingers of greed, to make all see that nothing mattered but health and endurance and justice and a day's work in the sunlight. Towns were evil.

There will be no sickness in that world, and the old will die smiling in their sleep. There will be no war.

Sixteen long years of war and craft. That had been the penalty of Cleomenes for daring to proclaim the age of simplicity again. Yet there was that in him which loved the struggle, the brutal test of facing death, the summons of his followers to complete submission and renunciation. Was that where the flaw lay?

'Come and see me more often,' he said to Ptolemaios.

'Soon you'll be free again,' said Ptolemaios, taking his hand and pressing it. 'Your friends are working for you.'

Cleomenes was content. Somehow the wish to fight was passing from him in Alexandria. Fading into a deepening wonder, a further inquiry for the reason of man's birth and effort.

Perhaps he had missed the leading motives in the complex society that was developing. He saw greed, and greed assuredly was evil; but perhaps out of the complexity a stronger love and faith would arise. Looking into the candid face of Ptolemaios, he believed at last that this was indeed the truth. He felt humble. He would learn everything anew. The boy-king and his courtiers were fellow-Greeks after all. They would not wantonly wish him evil. The world was good, and men loved one another.

A few more jesting words were exchanged, and Ptolemaios went out.

Cleomenes noticed a ring on the floor. It had been dropped when Ptolemaios stripped for the jump. He rose and picked up the ring, finding it a signet-ring of silver with a sphinx seal cut in onyx. He hastened from the room to catch Ptolemaios before he left the building.

The steps were covered with woollen rugs, and there was a painted curtain hung across the hall. Beyond the curtain was an improvised guard-house, where the soldiers of the King of Egypt watched the comings and goings of servants or visitors. Cleomenes heard them talking, clattering their spear-ends on the mosaic. They were talking with Ptolemaios.

Cleomenes had his hand on the curtain when he heard the voice of Ptolemaios. It was a young, fresh voice that refused to be subdued, and Cleomenes heard clearly what was said.

'Very good, my men. Keep a close watch, for you guard a wild beast.'

Cleomenes stood stiff with agony.

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His heart leaped, and something within him died. The fierceness woke in his blood, the rage that had enjoyed the battles, that had thought of his kingdom merely as a militarist machine for the greater glory of Sparta.

So Ptolemaios had come to spy, to take back the latest threat of the caged Spartan, to laugh in mockery as he told those fretful words to the tittering court of Philopator; to play with the ringlets of Agathoclea when Philopator was too drunk to notice; to lie and draw on the man who trusted him and who saw in him only the golden body of his youth, not the dark soul of ambition and weakness.

Cleomenes found himself stifling. The rigidity went from his body, and he struggled for breath. A tremendous rage clove his mind with a blade of darkness, and he moved towards the curtain again. Once he laid his hands on Ptolemaios, nothing would make him let go. They might kill him, but Ptolemaios would also die.

Then the rage ebbed, and the voice of his ancient purpose returned. The end was not yet. He must not throw away his life. His death must be a trumpet-call to slothful man, or an enduring accusation. He must die as the God willed, not as his tortured emotions demanded.

Slowly, with lowered head, he returned to the hall. He resumed his seat and waited. Why was he so angry and hurt? Had he not always known that the greeds of city-life corrupted? He should have looked for nothing else. He should have had no trust save in his purpose, the voice of the God, the inspiring words that Agiatis, now dead in child-birth, had

spoken in his arms. She had made him see the truth, and she had died through her love, she had died bringing into the world his children. Was he to fail her now?

Panteus had come back from the women's rooms upstairs; and he and the others noticed that a heavier gloom than usual had settled on Cleomenes. Only Hippitas, holding up the roll to catch the light fully and mumbling to himself, was unconcerned. He had had enough of adventuring, and wanted to do nothing but read henceforth. While one read, one seemed to hold the key to the truth of things, to be a conscious part of the human enigma; and therefore it was a pity that one had always to start reading another book and to suffer from sore eyes and to have one's reading disturbed by a profane world.

Cleomenes looked up.

'We are going to break out of here,' he said in his most stubborn accents, staring at the men before him and making a rapid gesture as if tearing a curtain apart.

The others burst into a shout of joy, and Hippitas, startled, dropped his roll, blinking.

Cleomenes held up his hand. 'You must be quiet.'

They wished to question him, but knew that note of finality in his voice. They must leave him till he thought fit to tell them more. Clustering round the table, they talked gleefully in repressed tones, glancing up every while with a furtive expectance at the head of the table where Cleomenes sat. They were sure that he meant to lead them out of Egypt, to devise a plan whereby they might sally from the

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prison, make a dash for the quays, and seize a ship. What plans he could have beyond that did not worry them as yet. They wanted to be out in the open. Cleomenes would find some way of gathering an army and invading Sparta to reclaim his own.

Panteus was the most delighted of all, for he would be able to take Rhodope with him. She would dress as a lad and run at his side till they raided the dockyards. Some day Cleomenes would regain Sparta, and then Panteus would have his home again, sharing it with Rhodope in the land they both loved.

Cleomenes sat with his head in his hands. The darkness was clearing away. He could almost see now. Flares of enrapturing vision broke upwards, then subsided. Soon would come a calm certainty of purpose. He would know what it was that lay before him to do. That was all he wanted. When he knew, he would do it, whatever it was.

Slowly, piece by piece, he unfolded the details of his plan, and the twelve Spartans saw in it the old strategical shrewdness of their general. Philopator had gone holidaying in river-barges to Canopos, to listen to music among the reeds. His absence could be used to beguile the guard of soldiers who kept the door of the house. One of the slaves was to be sent out and to return with news that he had a letter from the King for Cleomenes and that he had heard Cleomenes was to be set free. The guard would then overhear the Spartans rejoicing and drinking. Other slaves would be sent out to order large

supplies of festal provisions, and relays of presents were to be delivered, the porters being instructed to declare that they were bringing gifts from the king to Cleomenes.

For it was the custom that the king thus sent provisions to a man whom he was freeing from imprisonment; and the soldiers would relax their discipline, drinking and eating of the provisions sent down to them from the board of the man whom they should be guarding.

The twelve Spartans worked zealously, eager for the hour when they would once more be aboard ship with Cleomenes, escaped from Egypt, making a bid, however desperate, for the country of their birth. Cleomenes said little, except to direct the preparations.

All went as he had arranged. The presents arrived. With garlanded head he offered sacrifice and feasted among his twelve followers, and the soldiers of the guard laid aside their spears and unbuckled their swordbelts to eat of the roasted lamb and to drink deep of the Syrian wine. The feasting went on all that night; and next morning the Spartans held a council, thirteen men, with the wife of Panteus and the mother of Cleomenes sitting among them at the table.

They sang the Spartan battle-songs of Turtaios and drinking-songs that they had learned at camps pitched all over Hellas; and they laughed and wrestled, thinking of the ship that would soon be theirs, and the fear in the world when it was rumoured that Cleomenes was at large again, seeking for his kingdom.

Cleomenes drank, but, as ever, was unaffected by the wine. His muscles



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tautened, and the voices of the wine in his blood were as an unruly rabble which he could quell by the mere tensivity of his unregarding will.

A slave entered and whispered to Therucion, who rose and gestured for silence.

'My man tells me that one of the slaves who knows everything has gone out. To see his girl — so he said. If he has gone to betray us, it is time we set to work.'

Cleomenes spoke without rising.

'Listen to me.'

The others sat still, frightened by something distant and eerie in his voice. They knew that they were about to hear from him words they did not wish to hear. Their joy died into anxiety, and suddenly life grew intolerably oppressive, entangled, no longer a single-hearted adventure.

'We are not leaving Egypt.'

They gasped and stirred angrily. Therucion spoke in tones of slow despair.

'Then you give up the attempt?'

'No.'

The voice of Cleomenes was calm, but filled with a passionate intensity. It invaded the minds of his listeners, chilling them, but gripping them painfully.

'Have pity on us and speak out your mind.'

Panteus felt lost again, hopeless, still leaning against Rhodope, his deep-bosomed wife whose hair was as yellow as his own. Cleomenes turned to him with suffering eyes.

'I told you that we were to break out of here. That is what we have to do. We must call on the citizens to rise and become free.'

Therucion laughed scornfully.

'The Alexandrians! A putrid mixture of Egyptian, Greek, and Jew! What can they know of freedom? I tell you that I for one won't go with you on such a fool's errand.'

'Listen to the King,' said Hippitas, astonished at his own voice.

There was silence for a while, and then Cleomenes spoke again.

'I have learned something that I did not know. We sought to bring freedom to Sparta alone. That is why we failed. Until all the states are free, one state cannot return to the ways of justice. That is why we failed. So much I know.'

His eyes sought out the lined face of his grey-haired mother. She nodded to him.

'But Sparta——' cried Panteus, his heart wrung; for to him Sparta was a deep-bosomed woman with yellow hair. 'I thought you loved Sparta and wished to see her great and free.'

'That was so,' said Cleomenes, 'and I did right, being King of Sparta, even though what I did was doomed to failure. For I have failed. I was embittered by that. I sought for the flaw in myself and in the world. I blamed myself for ambition and I said that greed had too deeply tainted the blood of the world. And I was wrong. Neither myself nor the world was to blame. It was the suffering of God . . .'

His voice died away, and his head sank over his breast.

It was what the others had dreaded, the moment of his possession when he spoke things they could not understand. At such a moment they wanted to shout out and bid him stop his mouth, for his words were terrible and shameful as

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blasphemy. They felt as if every merciful covering was stripped from their lives and they were called upon to enter into a stark light of judgment. Under that stark light they would be impelled to promise things from which they would flee at ordinary times – impossible things

Cleomenes raised his head and went on.

‘We are in Egypt now, and our task is here. The voice of God changes, and that is the most difficult thing of all. I do not know what the end is to be. That is not for us to ask. Though my heart yearns for Sparta, like all your hearts, yet here is the task that is given to us.’

Panteus spoke in a strained voice of appeal.

‘It’s too much, Cleomenes. We’re ready to die with you if need be, but put us to work where we can see the meaning of things . . . ’

‘That’s exactly how I feel,’ said Therucion, banging the table with his cup. The others moved uneasily.

Hippitas spoke, again marvelling at his voice. ‘The God is everywhere. Moreover, so are Sun and Earth, the best of the Gods, maybe the only ones. I see no reason why we should not fight here.’

Cleomenes looked at him tenderly. Then he addressed the others.

‘Let those who are not with me, rise and go.’

Therucion stood up determinedly; but Pausias made one last effort to bring Cleomenes to see reason as it was seen by his followers.

‘These people don’t want your freedom. They want only to live their domestic lives under the protection of

the State. What do they care if a fool or a drunkard is at the head of things as long as the form of government does its work? They want freedom to build their homes, not freedom to shape the State. Who are we to say that they’re not right? It’s different in Sparta. That’s our own land . . . ’

Cleomenes stared ahead with stony eyes, not listening. Pausias ended, throwing out his hands despondently. He rose and joined Therucion, followed by the others, except Hippitas. Panteus half-rose, bent over, and whispered to Rhodope. She shook her head and he sank down again, his head over her breasts. She folded him proudly in her arms.

Cratesiclea looked at her son.

‘Maybe all that you say is not clear to me, and maybe it is not all clear to yourself. But you have spoken what is in your heart, and though an old woman is of no use in a street-fight, I give you my blessing. I am too old, my son, to think of other lands than Sparta, but maybe what you have in your heart is only another way of serving Sparta after all; and however that may be, I am content.’

Therucion bit savagely at his nails.

‘Do you mean, Cleomenes, that you’ll go out into the street with no more than these two men, and one of them half lame?’

Cleomenes turned to him, and this time his eyes were serene.

‘I shall go out with these two men, and my heart will overflow with gratitude that life has been so good to me.’

‘I can’t let you do it alone,’ said Therucion. ‘May God curse me for a fool, but I’ll stay with you.’

He swaggered back to his seat.

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'Give me some more wine.'

Amphares stared white-faced at Cleomenes.

'You're our King. I can't go.'

He returned to the table, the others with him.

Hippitas looked round the table. He seemed to have read all about it somewhere in a book. It was the tale of an antique hero, not something occurring in the civilized city of Alexandria. That was why he had to stay to the end. He had read it all before, and yet he didn't know how the story ended. This time no noisy interruptions must take his mind from the reading. If Cleomenes had been prevented from carrying out his plan, it would have been like finding the end of the roll torn away, so that the heroic story was left wretchedly with no end and no meaning.

Cleomenes drank with steady hand.

'I'll explain what we have to do, briefly, for there is no time to lose.'

It was nearing noon. The guards had been kept up all night and had dropped asleep, heavy with wine and food. Their spears were piled in sheaf by the outer door. They had unlaced their corselets and dropped their swords on the floor. Now they lay with open mouths snoring on the benches or the rugs. The Spartans had slept after midnight, bidding their trusted servants to drink and sing and make as much noise as possible, to deceive the guards; and the servants had enjoyed the task. The guards had been deceived.

Panteus had been thinking. Perhaps there was hope after all. The troops of Philopator were mercenaries, mostly Greeks. Many of them were

men from Southern Greece; some had doubtless served under Cleomenes in past campaigns; and one and all must hold the name of Cleomenes in admiration. Why should they not be roused to revolt? They could have no sense of loyalty towards their paymaster, the Ptolemaic Lord of Egypt.

Surely that was the hope. There lay the plan of the reticent Cleomenes.

But Panteus did not dare to ask, lest he should see in the eyes of Cleomenes once more that distracted look and hear him speak dark words that gave to life a significance too great for a man to bear. Panteus wanted to say, 'Ask me to die with you, and I'll die. Ask me because I love you, not because of this God of yours.'

He clasped Rhodope in his arms, and said nothing, either to her or to Cleomenes. His love was simple and needed no words. Both Rhodope and Cleomenes knew the meaning of his love without words. Why then speak of duties beyond a man's vision?

'Come now,' said Cleomenes, and they followed him down the steps.

The two women stood on the landing above and watched. Cleomenes parted the curtain, passed through, and his twelve men passed through after him. The women in the background heard the sound of rattling arms, the drunken snorts of the disturbed sleepers, the excited murmurs of the men arming. They turned and rested in one another's arms, the old mother of Cleomenes and the young wife of Panteus.

'Death is not hard,' said the old woman. 'I say it though I'm old, and the old cling to life more than the

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young. It is not hard for women who love the men that we love.'

Rhodope shuddered. 'I can't bear to think of him dying after the years have made him so beautiful, and I have borne him no child.'

The men had finished arming themselves. The guards were awakening. One of them rose and was knocked down. The shapes wavered beyond the curtain. Then, with a charging yell, the Spartans had left the house and dashed into the street.

The women turned and withdrew, their arms about one another.

Out in the street the Spartans stood for a moment, as if coming into fierce light after weeks of darkness. They waved their weapon and sang. There were only a few passers in the street, for it lay in a residential district towards the Palace Quarter. Time would be wasted there. They wanted to reach the crowded areas and call on the Alexandrians to rise and become a free people, throwing off the despotism of their ruler and his endless officials, discarding the greed that made such officials necessary, discovering in their hearts the core of manhood that died utterly only when a man lay in his tomb.

'Follow me,' said Cleomenes, and sped down the street.

The others ran behind him, grimly silent. At the corner Cleomenes halted to get his bearings more clearly.

Hippitas groaned. 'I can't run with this leg of mine. I'm no use. I'll only ruin things for you. Who will stab me between the ribs? My own hand's too shaky.'

'No need for that,' shouted Therucion. He ran into the roadway and

grasped the mane of an approaching horse. The horse reared and threw its rider, a fashionably-dressed Alexandrian. Therucion leaped on its back, quieted it, and rode it to the corner where his friends waited. Then he dismounted and helped Hippitas into the daintily-chased saddle.

Already the group had attracted attention. Further up the roadway a crowd had collected, watching with bewildered interest.

'If you're men,' called Therucion, 'get your swords and come with us. To-day Alexandria is a free city.'

With wails the crowd turned and fled. After them ran the Spartans, keeping pace with Hippitas on the horse. Into a main street they burst, shouting, preceded by a mob of fugitives. People fell over and were trampled in the press. Barrows and litters were lying splintered. Shopkeepers frenziedly tried to shut up their shops. Women screamed and rushed into the nearest doors.

Cleomenes leaped ahead and lifted a child from under the pawing hooves of the horse of Hippitas. Holding the child up, he looked round in vain for the mother. He placed the child safely at the side of the street, and then rejoined his Spartans.

They gazed on the disordered scene. There was no hope of appealing to such a terrified herd.

'To the Palace!' shouted Cleomenes, and the Spartans turned up the road, led by Cleomenes and Hippitas on his horse. They had forgotten all their doubts about the exploit. They felt only the joy of action, and ran without effort, loping easily like men used to running all day.

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Everywhere they were greeted by screams and flight. But the noise and turmoil was merely an obscure stimulus to their exalted spirits. Whatever was before them to do, that they would do with laughter and fury. The swords were as light in their hands as staffs of papyrus-reed. But it was the enemy that would snap in two at striking-time, not the swords. Ai!

They reached an outlying wing of the huge royal buildings; and Cleomenes knew why he had led his men in this direction. It was here that young Ptolemaios had his rooms.

Cleomenes stared at the men who were jostling out into the portico. Yes, there was Ptolemaios, lured by the uproar, keen to miss nothing of the excitement.

Rage leaped within Cleomenes, and the sword lifted in his hand. The sword felt like a twisting snake to his tightening muscles.

'The wild beast is free!' he cried, and struck Ptolemaios down.

Then he looked at the youth dying in the dust, moaning and puzzled; and pity rose in him, an acrid wave of nausea. Then that was the end of pity, and the end of all vengeance. He knelt down and took the dying youth in his arms and kissed him, and laid the body carefully on the ground.

Everyone else had fled.

'Where are we to go?' asked Panteus, jealous for a moment of Ptolemaios, jealous of his death.

'To the state-prison,' replied Cleomenes. 'We will loose the prisoners and make them the nucleus of our forces.'

But as they turned they saw a detachment of soldiers headed by an

officer in a two-horsed chariot and advancing up the road. Without waiting for an order the Spartans hurled themselves against the oncomers.

'I bid you to desist and keep the peace of the city,' began the officer, rising in his chariot. Then the Spartans were upon him and his men. He was torn from the chariot and flung under the trampling hooves of his frightened horses. The charging wedge of the Spartans drove through the line of guards, turned, and drove through them again. Then the guards fled, leaving ten men dead or dying in the roadway.

'Now to the prison,' shouted Cleomenes.

The Spartans set off, loping down the road once more. But fugitives from the skirmish had already reached the prison, and the outer doors were closed and barred. The Spartans hurled themselves against the wood and hacked at it with their swords, but the iron bolts and studs made it impossible to cut through. They climbed up on one another's shoulders, but the walls were too high. Fire alone could break the doors down, but they had no fire.

Undiscouraged, they retired down the road, again seeking the heart of the city. Now all the shops and houses were closed and shuttered, and the roads were strewn with garments and bits of shopping, fruit from stalls, and overturned loads. Somewhere a trumpet was pealing in alarm. Through the upper windows citizens peered in panicked curiosity at the band of madmen running past.

The Spartans had moved about so quickly that people imagined several

## Death of a Spartan King

bands had been seen. The report grew that hundreds of brigands were loose in the city. Brigands shouting of freedom. Madmen.

Cleomenes was growing distraught at the solitude with which they found themselves surrounded. How could he ever rouse these creatures who fled at his approach and refused to listen to his words? Was he indeed a wild beast to them?

The Spartans had entered the great Canopic Street that ran through Alexandria from east to west, lined with expensive shops and elegant dwellings. But still no one came to hear their message. At last, reaching a square, Cleomenes called on his men to halt. He was determined to give the Alexandrians every chance to share in the redemption that he offered. If they feared him when he came hurrying along, perhaps they would lose their fear if he stood still and waited for them.

He ascended a stone tribunal made for the use of the Public Crier. His Spartans stood about the base, eleven on foot and leaning on their swords, one man sitting on horseback, calming a scared horse.

'My friends,' he cried, and his voice sounded strange and toneless in the empty square. 'Listen to me.'

He knew that behind the shutters and the curtains of the houses people were listening, cowards who hid from the one choice that would come their way on earth. His was the voice that would shame them all. A profound pride swelled his spirit, not for his own part in the doing and the speaking, but for the honour of being chosen by the God to speak and to do.

'On this day a world dies and a world is born. Listen to me. I give you all freedom. Freedom not only from the tyrant and the usurer, but freedom from the lust and the greed that have given the tyrant and the usurer their power. By our sins are we weak, and our sin is covetousness. All sins are found in that one sin. I proclaimed the truth to Sparta, and after sixteen years of battle I am a king without a land, a man without a home. So now I speak to you all, Spartans and Alexandrians alike.'

His voice died away, and he waited for a response.

There was silence in the square. Beneath him rested his twelve men, waiting to be attacked. Hippitas leant forward and patted the neck of his horse. The roll of life was worth reading; there would be no break across the roll of Cleomenes; it would be a tale told right to the end.

Cleomenes waited, sure of the God. There was silence. The whole city of Alexandria, with its hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, seemed a city of the dead.

They were men cast out, condemned without a hearing. They prowled up and down the streets, calling on all they saw; but they saw very few. Only an occasional straggler who grew demoralized at the sight of them. The dockyards were shut and set with guards. So were the city gates. But no one dared to attack the thirteen Spartans. The city-general was dead and no one liked to take the initiative. Uncertain of their troops, the officers contented themselves with garrisoning the public buildings and barring the doors. Mes-

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senger after messenger had been sent to the court holidaying at Canopos, to the minister Sosibios and the boy-king Philopator. It was simplest to wait for further orders.

So Cleomenes and his twelve followers terrorized the populous city of Alexandria, and hundreds of thousands quaked behind their shutters because thirteen men had dared to proclaim Freedom in the streets.

At last the Spartans took some fruit from a broken barrow and went into the Park, the Paneion. There they climbed the hillock and sat down on the steps of the Shrine, eating calmly. Below them was stretched the silent city.

'Are we left alone alive on the earth?' asked Panteus. 'Or are we mad?'

'We are neither,' said Cleomenes. 'But we are men born before their day.'

A voice answered. 'No man is born before his day.'

Relieved to find that at least one man had the courage to address them, the Spartans turned to stare at the beggarly figure that had come across the grass by another path. Then they saw that the man, though in rags, was no beggar. He walked with dignity and carried the scrip of the wandering Cynic preacher.

Cleomenes turned to him gravely. 'Why then is it that we are sitting here?'

'You act according to your nature,' replied the Cynic, 'and so do the men of Alexandria. Cleomenes, I have come to see you die.'

Cleomenes looked down again on the deserted city and heard the

cowering silence of menace in the city which he had summoned to freedom, and he laughed, with a resolution neither gay nor bitter.

'Death is always within our choice. That I learned from my master. Death and virtue.'

'I am one who lives only to analyze words,' said the Cynic quietly, resting on his staff. 'For it is by words that man is sustained, not by food or divine reason; and all sin and error are the result of a wrong use of words.'

Cleomenes spoke to his followers, almost as if asking their permission.

'I have a mind to talk with this man.'

The Spartans nodded and settled down on their seats of stone. They felt lifted out of things, aloof yet curious. They too were inclined to talk and listen. It was such a little while before they died. Their palms were hot and chafed where they had gripped the swords. Now they dropped the swords on the pavement, and lolled at ease. What had been the meaning of their deed?

'You have spoken of freeing men,' said the Cynic. Cleomenes bowed his head in assent, and the Cynic went on. 'I see two words there, freedom and men. Either those two words must coincide or you have proclaimed a lie. Did you mean that all men were to be free, slave and freeborn, Greek and barbarian?'

'I do not know,' said Cleomenes, frowning. 'I thought only of Greeks.'

'Consider your terms,' replied the Cynic. 'Is man distinct from Greek? Does the Greek alone open his mouth at birth and wail?'

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'He has the blood of his fathers,' said Therucion angrily.

'Peace,' said Cleomenes in mild tones. 'There is truth in what the preacher says. It seems to me now to be what the God said, but I did not hear it all. Perhaps that is why we failed.'

'Have you failed?' asked the Cynic, tracing a circle on the ground with his staff. 'And if you had used your words as I have now analyzed them, would that have called one more man to your side?'

'No,' said Cleomenes slowly. 'The truth was in my words, though I did not know it all. Yet what you say does but make even darker this deed of ours. For all men must be free or the God is a liar; and yet men have fled from my voice that offered freedom.'

'You offered too much, or too little.'

Panteus knew what the Cynic meant. The men who had fled wanted to be free to toil for their families; to build with the best of their powers in the security that the present state of things promised. Beyond oppression and injustice they saw the hope of earning enough to keep a home intact, to possess wife and children and the comfort of a hearth. The virtue of Cleomenes was a soldier's virtue. It threw off all ties at the trumpet-call, put aside parent and child, saw only the duty of strength and obedience to the inner voice.

Cleomenes himself was shaken for a moment, then he smiled and his smile deepened into a subtle happiness. He had thought that he would make his gesture and that if it failed, the

failure would be with those who failed to respond; that the death of the liberators would be the accusation of their betrayers. But now things seemed different. There was no accusation, only the sense of standing on a windy mountain-top under the stars, deaf to the withdrawn earth of fear.

'We have not failed. We are men, who abide our test; and the end is not yet.'

His voice rang with a poignant urgency, a plea and a command.

The Cynic moved back and stood leaning against the wall, feeling very tired. He did not want to say any more, being filled with a dragging pity that cried out against all his creeds. But he had to speak again.

'Among all the men on earth, Cleomenes, there are no men free, except myself, who desire nothing at all, and you who have desired everything. Farewell for ever.'

He covered his face, for he felt an intruder now on emotions that were not for him. He had seen the excitement that was kindling among the Spartans, as if the last words of Cleomenes had laid hold of them and stirred them to a new fortitude.

They were looking at Cleomenes.

Panteus rose to his feet, staggering. He felt drawn up by unseen hands. He wanted to weep for the lost breasts of Rhodope, her tender hands, her clear eyes. But something was changing in him, like a rack of storm-clouds, glorying.

'Cleomenes, King of Sparta,' he called in a hoarse voice. 'Cleomenes, King of the Earth.'

Then he kissed Cleomenes on the cheek.



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The others rose and did as he had done.

They had forgotten the silent city, the utter lack of response to their appeals, the loneliness of their failure. They had failed to free Alexandria, but they had freed themselves. They owned with absolute love the earth that they were about to leave. Fatigue, lack of sleep, the battle-stress, wine, the rapturous mystery of words and gestures that fitted into a burning symbolism of victory and renunciation – all these elements combined to drug them with an exaltation. For they were on the edge of death, already giddy with the wind of that descent in their hair; falling, yet sustained.

Cleomenes stood exultant in his pride.

Had not he and his men at last put aside all greed? Was not their love of the earth purged of cruelty and rapacious envy? They had loved Sparta, because it was the earth, their bodies. Freedom was the possession of one's body, its energies redeemed from all that breeds poison in the blood. Things were as they should be.

I am at the end of the roll, thought Hippitas, and it has been good to read, and now I am almost part of the Mystery that I celebrate; now the priest becomes the god.

He was glad that they had not killed him when he was compelled to cry out. He had wanted to see the consecrating end, to hear the words of purpose.

Cleomenes roused himself.

'It is time for us to die.'

Their freedom would be lost if they were captured. Sosibios would

have them impaled, flayed, racked, burned. They must die now to preserve their freedom, to leave its message distinct. They must climb with the moment, high.

They thought of the things that they had wanted; a house, a woman, a farm in the hills, an olive-grove, books, a gymnasium, a city strong and beautiful, built in stone. With agony of regret they thought; and then the images of all the things they had wanted became part of the great moment of farewell. The wife was embraced, and the house inhabited; the trees thickened with fruit, and the city of enduring stone was built.

They collected their swords again; and Hippitas, fearing for the weakness of his arm, asked that they should kill him first; and they killed him. Then the others were killed, one after the other, smiling, till only Panteus and Cleomenes were left. Then Cleomenes smiled at Panteus, and they stood for a while looking into each other's eyes, forgetting everything. But at last Cleomenes remembered and touched his left side with his fingers, and Panteus stabbed him.

Then Panteus, being the only one left, laid out the others decently and pricked each man with the dagger to make sure that he was dead; and when he pricked Cleomenes in the ankle, Cleomenes twisted and turned over on his back. So Panteus, seeing that he was not quite dead, kissed him, and sat down at his side. After a time he saw that Cleomenes was dead indeed, and covered him with his cloak, and stabbed himself in the heart so that he fell over the body of Cleomenes.

## Death of a Spartan King

The Cynic, seated on his ledge of stone, did not move. He was weeping. Why should he weep for men who acted on the madness of impulse and could not stand aside to find wisdom in the slow withdrawal from all the bonds of love and power that snared man to the world? There was no room for tears in his philosophy, yet he often wept, begging his way and sharing his crusts with other beggars who were not driven by the need to analyze the strange conjunctions of words.

What, he asked himself, was the certainty that had gathered in the spirits of these men? Was it the faith that they had become part of the race? that their effort, once made, was

eternal, echoing into the future until it found its full explication in the completing effort of other men? Was it only an intoxication of the moment, a compensating lie? Words, always words . . .

The Cynic, vowed to poverty and celibacy, wondered; and his heart was dark with a dreadful desolation. He envied the people of Alexandria who were huddling in their houses, slaves to the family-bond, to the love of wife and children, to the need of toiling and chaffering for money.

Dusk crept down over the crowded silent city, drawing a kindly shroud over the temple-pavement where the twelve Spartans lay dead about their King.

# Refractions

by Florida Pier

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## STATUES

EACH life is a posture. In the blaze of experience we unfold as a flower, or, like some dancer of the Orient, with averted head and lowered eyes we bend to our final attitude. These merging movements are the sum of our cycle. They are what we do in the face of life, and what life does to us. One slow movement is a lifetime's comment and response. With rooted feet each body utters its single syllable. One may slowly rise to full height and with arms upstretched stare wide-eyed into the truth that blinds and will not be discerned. Another with slow consummation passes his hand over his body's full vitality; or, quivering with an alertness so intense that all movement is stilled, a third stands with closed eyes unable to bear more than his own sentience. A fourth yields to the tenderness she feels bathing her until, finding its source, she holds her hand as a cup at her own heart. A fifth denies in favour of a harmony that eludes, yet must exist, and is sought for, strained after by the listening eyes and negating sway of the head. Others lie for ever crouched in terror, lips twitching in propitiating grimace; others snarl as from the mouth of a cave, or whirl endlessly to pounce on the menace approaching from behind; or else

they swell and boom to allay their own fears with their own noise, and each is convinced that theirs was the inevitable movement dictated by the notes of the reality they heard. But along with conviction runs the desire to be in unison with someone else, for if the notes heard and answered to were real for another, then the thing they sought and lied and died in following was perhaps real and not a shadow of themselves.

## SPECTRUMS

We are as caught in our outlines as though we were crystals and our refractions of experience were limited by the number of our facets. We act as spectrums breaking life into qualities as light into colours, for what are colours but qualities of light, and what are qualities but degrees of life, and what is life but light? There is a point of emotional intensity where one feels not a quality but light itself. Then time and entity lose their hold. Consciousness is so freed from time that it packs a blast of experience into something too small to be measured as time. Time is perception of aspects. It is the zero's awareness of positive and negative. If we attempt to resolve the two into one, we fall as helpless as a tortoise on its back,

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waving at the sky where we have placed our symbol of unity.

## SIGNALS

I have caught a glimpse of law. I have sensed the movement of the world. That which relinquishes something in becoming form was for a moment clear to me. I almost know or I half remember. Law signals to me in the shape of a shell, in the mathematical branching of an araucaria, in the centrifugal unfolding of the chrysanthemum's petals. Energy makes itself visible, motion shows me its pattern, and I pulse with the motion that paused in the pattern. Then the energy ebbs from my sight and I am left with form which puzzles me because it is so separate. It tricks me into doubting the reality of that which slowed into form, so real is form itself. Actuality seems an illusion maintained beyond the limit of the possible. The strain is intolerable as I wait in this breathless stillness of hard outline. Held prisoner in the sleep of living, I am numb with having half known the unknowable.

## ACTUALITY

I look in at actuality as into a brightly lighted room full of people all strange to me. I step inside pleased at the variety I see, wondering at the air of solidity everyone wears. I cannot follow what is said, for so much seems to be taken for granted that I am constrained at having come too late to ever understand. If I am addressed I glance to the right and left in search of a place where I may the better

receive the remark, so little do I know what to do with it. No one sees the wide-open door through which I came, and so dazzled am I by the great discrepancy between there and here that, though I know my reality is close behind, I cannot tell of it. If I turned I could tell it all, but I cannot turn, I am held as in a nightmare. I must find order in this bright, disturbing room. But it was order that I left outside in that whirling darkness. This is chaos. Suddenly frightened I try to escape by conforming quickly lest I be kept too long. I name things, I call a shade a thing in itself, I declare opposites to be something more than relations, I am in a net and I am desperate. Will more be asked of me than my voice and hands? Surely I shall not have to give all of myself? I move slowly backwards until I stand at the very edge of that which is exit and entrance. My foot is on the threshold and I feel the great rhythms circling just outside the door, but I am gripped by the agony of choosing. Which way shall I turn? Which way?

## PREDICAMENT

I have become inextricably entangled in a mechanical doll. Some say the doll is me, but that is absurd, though I admit that I am embarrassingly implicated. I must be so lightly attached, yet I cannot shake myself loose. It is possible that I have in some way become connected with the machinery. The discrepancy between the doll and me is so great that there is something peculiarly annoying in the conspiracy everyone seems to be in to

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pretend that our connection is natural. My entire energy is consumed in protesting that the arrangement is not of my making, and what should be clear to everyone is that it places me at a disadvantage. I have had moments of thinking that the thing was going to run down, but now that it has gone so far and led me into many equivocal situations, so that I am flustered and can hardly remember where I do rightly belong, I ask you to where, in case the thing should stop, to where could I jump?

# Tunes Ancient and Modern<sup>1</sup>

by G. M. Young

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*Still more majestic shalt thou rise,  
More dreadful from each foreign stroke:  
As the loud blast that rends the skies  
Serves but to root thy native oak.  
Rule Britannia: AV.*

*A birthday, a birth  
On English earth  
Restores, restore will, has restored  
To England's story  
The directed calm, the actual glory.  
Rule Britannia: RV.*

## I

ONE of the few things in our age that strikes me as being really new is its metre.

Quan la douss' aura venta  
Deves vostre pais:  
M' es vejaire qu' eu senta  
Odor de Paradis.

A icel jor que la dolor fu grans,  
Et la bataille orrible en Aliscans.

Aspice, Christicola, quae dignatio.

For eight centuries Europe went on writing to those tunes, or something like them, and on the whole we wrote them better than anyone else. We are still writing them:

And sang within the bloody wood  
When Agamemnon cried aloud,  
And let their liquid siftings fall  
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

One would not be surprised to find that movement in Akenside, or this in Mr. Eliot:

O my loved England, when with thee  
Shall I sit down to part no more,  
Far from this pale, discoloured sea,  
That sleeps upon the reedy shore?

Why then have we begun, suddenly it appears, to write also to the tune of

Midday, the sloped watershed of light,  
Parts the morning, the long faunal  
hours  
Stay talking in the woods, for now one  
hears  
Clang of sword and trumpet from the  
hard leaves  
Hitting out, loud glittering, in the  
sharp falling light,  
Spilled like thrown water.

The archæologists have a canon that artifacts develop through an infinite sequence of infinitesimal changes, and that if at any point a gap, or a leap, appears, then some outer influence must have been at work. The stock of the crossbow grows into the stock of the rifle along an unbroken curve of adaptation; but Turks take to bowlers

<sup>1</sup> *Aspects of Modern Poetry*, by Edith Sitwell;  
*A Hope for Poetry*, by C. Day Lewis.

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because the Ghazi wills it. From Sidney to Mr. Yeats there is no point in English poetry at which one is conscious of any breach. Here one is aware of a revival, there of an anticipation: of development all the time, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow. But the ground tone is always the same. Then with Hopkins, Doughty and Bridges, this ground tone seems to die away. I am not questioning the 'magnificence' of these verses:

Their names are not written in bronze  
Nor their rowing sticks set with  
Elpenor's:  
Nor have they mound by seabord,  
That saw never the olives under  
Sparta  
With the leaves green and then not  
green;  
The click of light in their branches;  
That saw not the bronze hall nor the  
ingle,  
Nor lay there with the Queen's  
waiting maids.

Only, if I had encountered them written out as prose, I should have guessed that they were a clever school-boy's rendering from Leconte de Lisle. I should not have supposed that he was writing verse, still less that he was 'ennobling and transmuting all vain human ambition, sounding so hideously through the blustering voices of the emperors of modern industry.'<sup>1</sup> The English Muse has done her share of ennobling and transmuting things far more pitiful and desperate than anything our time is likely to be called upon to face:

<sup>1</sup> 'I reckoned Tom Sawyer believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me, I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday school.'

Pancrass & Kentish Town repose  
Upon her golden pillars high:  
Among her golden arches which  
Shine upon the starry sky.

But hitherto she has done it in verse which I can scan. I do not want to be left outside. Neither do I want to be taken in.

### II

I go on two presuppositions, one of which will be generally admitted: that verse is composed in a particular medium, and is performed on the corresponding instrument, namely, an internal, imaginary voice which follows the habit of the voice speaking and heard. The other, which may be questioned, is that the metrics of any nation must be grounded on what is felt, by children and simple people, to be rhythmical

Stow-in-the-Wold and Bourton-on-the-Water is rhythmical.

Greenhithe, Northfleet, Gravesend,  
Strood, Rochester and Chatham

is not. It lacks the singsong. Similarly,

To William Shenstone  
This plain stone:  
In life he displayed  
A mind truly natural:  
At Leasowes he made  
Arcadian walks rural,

though doubtless gratifying to the ear of its French author, is not English rhythm. Neither is

For three years, diabolus in the scale,  
He drank ambrosia,

## Tunes Ancient and Modern

All passes, anangke prevails,  
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

Alfred de Musset used

Man delights not me, Sir: nor woman  
neither,

as a French Alexandrine. But that does  
not make it an English Alexandrine.

Rhythm, being a function of the  
dominant speech habit of a whole race,  
cannot be created or changed by any  
individual. Here, at least, I have  
history on my side. Has any great  
poet ever written in other than the  
natural rhythms of his people, or in  
rhythms which were familiar to them  
by long practice? I can only recall one  
instance.<sup>1</sup> In the 'Road to Xanadu'  
Professor Lowes insists much on the  
novelty of Coleridge's metre:

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute:  
And now it is an angel's voice,  
That makes the heavens be mute.

The quotation does most happily sug-  
gest the varied music of Coleridge's  
verse. But rhythmically it is as old as  
the hills of Bethlehem.

While Shepherds watched their flocks  
by night,

All seated on the ground:  
The Angel of the Lord came down,  
And glory shone around.

The example he gives is still more  
suggestive.

But vainly thou warrest,  
For this is alone in  
Thy power to declare:

<sup>1</sup> Goethe's unrhymed lyrics. The Greek hexa-  
meter and French decasyllable were 'received' in  
Rome and England by a society which was  
practically bilingual.

That in the dim forest  
Thou heard'st a low moaning  
And found'st a bright lady, surpass-  
ingly fair.

In other words, but in the same rhythm,

Poor Jenny is weeping  
A weeping, a weeping:  
Poor Jenny is a weeping  
On a bright summer's day.

As these instances suggest, the singsong  
of speech tends to shape the musical  
habit of a race, and folk-music in its  
turn (I use the word in a wide sense to  
cover hymns as well) tends to support  
and confirm the speech-habit. A  
change of habit in music might very  
well weaken the hold on spoken  
rhythm, and perhaps something of the  
sort is happening now. I do not know.  
But if it is, then here would be such an  
alien influence as the archæologists  
posit to explain a solution of con-  
tinuity.

### III

I can put my difficulty another  
way, by taking the latest piece of verse  
that I have seen: Miss Phyllis Ash-  
burner's lines in *Life and Letters* for  
November, lines which contain much  
careful observation and graceful  
phrasing. If they were printed as  
prose I should, after two or three  
readings, re-verse them thus:

The stars above the unseen road are  
burning  
Whitefiery in the black flame of the  
night:  
Singing the furthest fire-thin edges  
Of the black twigs:



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Fold behind fold in the apparent black-  
ness,

Luminosity stretches deeper  
Than the deep star-supporting sky.

But from her manner of printing them,  
Miss Ashburner shows that they are to  
be taken quite differently :

The stars above the unseen  
Road are burning:

and I am left wondering why.

Now it will be noticed here that  
my voice instinctively composes the  
words into what I must call West  
European rhythm (English variety).

'The stars above the unseen road  
are burning', for example, arranges  
itself so, because I am habituated by  
the practice of twenty generations to  
such rhythms as

Conobbi il tremolar della marina;

The stately stars, with their new  
shining faces;

and it no more occurs to me to take  
them otherwise than it would have  
occurred to Sidney to write

The stately stars with their new –  
Shining faces.

But then I must ask: is this new form  
arrived at directly, or by counter-  
pointing against the old rhythm? I  
suppose even our youngest poets were  
once younger than they are: that they  
started with

Thirty days hath September  
April, June, November,

or

Oranges and lemons, say the bells of  
St. Clement's,

or

Many Latin nouns in *is*  
Are masculini generis,

or

Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour  
First begotten from the dead:

which takes us back a long way beyond  
Provence even. But what do they do  
with this ancestral, primitive metre  
when they sit down to compose? When  
they saw a log, with what hymns do  
they lighten their task? To what tune  
does their train croon its way through  
the night? <sup>1</sup>

### IV

I have for a long time hoped that  
Miss Sitwell, whose doctrine of texture  
has always seemed to me to point  
towards a critical rediscovery (Diony-  
sius got there first) of great interest and  
value, would come to grips with this  
question of rhythm. Her own verse I  
can almost always scan. Metrically, I  
think *The Little Ghost who Died for Love*  
one of the most beautiful things of our  
time. I can follow her when she  
castigates another critic for suggesting  
that if we took *shuddering* out of the line

Beyond the circuit of the shuddering  
Bear,

it would be metrically the same as

Cast in the unstilled Cyclades.

But would it not have saved labour to  
point out that one is iambic and the  
other trochaic? The weakness of Miss

<sup>1</sup> When I wrote this I had not seen Mr. Day  
Lewis' verses, which get the effect admirably:

Piston that will not stir  
Beyond the cylinder  
To take in its stride  
A teeming countryside.

## Tunes Ancient and Modern

Sitwell's method is that she works within a personal framework, with no ballast of impersonal knowledge to keep it from soaring into the clouds. Like the dithyrambic poet's verses in Aristophanes, her criticism is at times 'all air and mist and dark-blue-gleaming, visions of delicate feathered flying things,' and at those times it does invite his practical friend's comment: 'Easy all. Stop her.'

For this reason I have not found in her book all the instruction, or quite the guidance that I hoped for: nor any answer to my question whether modern rhythm is the old rhythm counterpointed more freely, or a new birth. Yet the question could I think be brought to a fairly simple issue. The injunctions with which the Muse started English poetry on its career were: iamb for strength, trochee for grace: dactyls on your peril: resolution to taste: no pæons: no colliding stresses, and therefore no inversions without a preparatory pause: go ahead. Do these injunctions still hold good? On the Muse's principles, for example, I can read

Seated in hearing of an hundred  
streams

as a legitimate variation upon

Not marching now in fields of Trasi-  
mene.

But is

And hurls for him, half hurls earth for  
him off under his feet,

a legitimate variation on

Universally crowned with highest  
praises,

or

Burnt after them to the bottomless  
pit,

lines which have always seemed to me the limiting instances of contrapuntal virtuosity? One touch more and the rhythm will be gone: the singsong will be silenced and the Muse will sulk.

Starting with an old tune like

Jehovah's wonders were in Israel  
shown:

His praise and glory was in Israel  
known:

any poet who is a poet can be trusted  
to finger his way out to:

Flowers of all hue and without thorn  
the rose,

or

Ruining along the illimitable inane,

or

Towery city, and branchy between  
towers,

and the Muse will approve. Vary your stitches as much as you like, but keep the pattern clear: counterpoint for all you are worth, but leave the ground tone audible. And if the Muse is asked: clear to whom? audible to whom? her answer hitherto has been: to children and simple people whom Heaven has blest with an ear. I believe there is no paradox in saying that nothing is metrical in English which could not be sung by a crowd to one of a dozen easy tunes.<sup>1</sup> Swin-

<sup>1</sup> And it is significant that there are very few decasyllabic tunes. It is not natural to us to say: The Ram, the Bull and then the heavenly twins. This is probably the reason why in ages with a confused rhythmical sense (the fifteenth century: early seventeenth: our own) the decasyllable goes to pieces first.

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burne annexed the most splendid measure in Greek and made it almost as splendid in English. Good reason why: it can be sung to *John Peel*.

Given a plain iambic

The freezing Danube through a waste of snows:

the Muse allows us to resolve:

The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows

or to invert:

Freezing, the Tanais through a waste of snows

but not (rule against the pæon)

Freezing, the Tanais amid a waste of snows,

certainly not (rule against collision).

Freezing, the Tanais amid a vast desert and least of all

Freezing, Tanais-like, amid a vast desert.

Yet no one would be surprised to encounter this line in any new volume of verse.

Hopkins' principles and practice were a challenge to the Muse on two points: the pæon and the collision of stress. The result is that his counterpoint tears through the tune altogether: his rhythm is sprung until it founders: as he suggested himself, it is something between prose and music, which is like saying of a dog that he is a Dalmatian in some lights and a collie in others. His verse – and I am not, I know, insensitive either to its autonomous music or the gnarled magnificence of its phrasing – is inimitable in the sense that the Temple at Gaza must have been inimitable after

Samson had pulled it down. After that, there is nothing for it but to go back to the temples which are standing or build again on the ruins. Unhappily, as it seems to me, Mr. Eliot has created a taste for sham ruins: the draught which he proffers too often tastes like the dregs of Elizabethan stage verse.

### V

Suppose with Hopkins we defy the Muse, what follows logically? One of two consequences, I think. Either we must substitute for the traditional poetic voice, and its controlling or underlying singsong, a more primitive kind of crooning prose voice, or else we must be prepared to make ourselves at home in a different rhythmical system altogether, which uses pæons and collisions structurally. We must go back, not only on the English Muse but on West European rhythm altogether, and learn once more to manage the Old Northern rhythm, of which *Piers Plowman* is the flattened and tuneless survival. This rhythm was strangely persistent in England. Most fitly it survived to celebrate in *Scottish Field* the last victory of the long-bow. It is often heard sounding in Wyatt, and in early Tudor verse.

What vailleth it riches, or what possession,

Gifts of high nature, noblesse in gentry,  
Deftness depured, or pregnant policy,  
Sith prowess, sith power have their progression?

Fate it is fatal on self-succession:

This world hath nothing that smelleth not frailty.

## Tunes Ancient and Modern

Where most assurance, is most un-  
surety:  
Here lieth Dame Anne, Lady of  
Dauntsey.

This seems to me to have a very noble, archaic movement, not unlike the earliest Roman epitaphs. But it could only have been written by a man who had in his ear the ancient rhythm which divided the lines sharply in the middle, setting on either side a phrase of two members, and linking them in an irregular alternation of falling and rising cadences. Soften this archaic stiffness, enrich its music, modulate its transitions and what will you get? Surely something like this.

These are no shepherds / of Sicilian  
shade,  
Ephebus of river bank / in beauty  
bathing,  
But men of the helmet ,/ of the metal  
waist,  
Ripe for the bull ,/ and of no other  
weapon,  
No spear, no shield ,/ and but a coil of  
rope;  
As fight of wasp and beetle ,/ as thin  
wire to armour,  
Their pride, their thinness /, when the  
wild-bulls come.

Here, it seems to me, we have verse which is new, and not a sham ruin: verse moreover which, if ever its rhythm is assimilated, might be the ancestor and forerunner of much more: verse such as Chaucer might have evolved if he had been born at York instead of London, and with an ear attuned therefore less to the *tremolar della marina* than

to the sound of the sea / and Sandwich  
bells.

But with Mr. Eliot, as with Hopkins, I constantly feel that his efforts to make something more, and something new, out of our inherited versification, are only producing something less, and something which was really worn out long ago.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages,  
contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering  
ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is dis-  
tracted  
And what she gives, gives with such  
supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving.  
Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still  
believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion.

I am afraid that I can hear in this nothing but a nineteenth century imitation of the Elizabethan decasyllable – and not Shakespeare's decasyllable either. In my ear it awakens echoes of the Spasmodics. But Mr. Eliot is a writer of great personality and power of speech. What will happen if a poet in whom these gifts have not yet matured tries to write like Mr. Eliot? Something, apparently, like this.

Is it worth while to make lips smile  
again,  
To transmit that uneasiness in us which  
craves  
A moment's mouthing, craves to bully  
the pain  
The pain and the pity of it into staves  
Of crabbed pothooks, filling the breadth

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Of titlepage to colophon?  
Is it worth while to debate upon  
The automatic sense which forces us  
To circumvent our quietus  
And put instead on record  
Reactions to the vibrations of a vocal  
chord?

But surely we have heard that before?  
Thy elder brother will be kinder yet,  
Unsent for death will come. To-morrow?

Well, what can to-morrow do?  
It will cure the sense of honour lost.  
I and my discontents shall rest together;

What hurt is there in this? But death  
against

The will is but a slovenly kind of  
potion:

And though prescribed by heaven, it  
goes against men's stomachs.

So does it at fourscore too, when the  
soul's

Mewed up in narrow darkness, neither  
sees nor hears.

Pish!<sup>1</sup>

Lines which almost justify the Long  
Parliament in closing the theatres, and  
which do, seriously, go a long way to  
account for the rhymed drama of the  
Restoration. What will our next turn  
be? I wonder, following this curve,  
whether it may not be something like  
this

Each atom of gold is the chance of a  
fruit:

The sap is the music, the stem is the  
flute:

And the leaves are the wings of the  
seraph I shape

Who dances, who springs in a golden  
escape,

<sup>1</sup> Suckling's *Aglaure*.

Out of the dust and the drought of the  
plain,  
To sing with the silver hosannas of rain.

## VI

Mr. Day Lewis' *Deffense et Illustration* of the new Pleiade has the centrality and receptive candour of all fine criticism, and it is written with a certain radiance which seems to me, possibly from the contrast with the Dirty Twenties, to be characteristic of our immediate time. There is much in it on which I should like to dwell: some things that I could question and that I should like to debate. But it does deserve its title, and I can well imagine it taking its place in literary history as the manifesto of a new age. But as, in the matter with which I am here concerned, Mr. Day Lewis seems to me to have gone astray, I should like to put my objections in some detail. The difficulty of discussing rhythm in print will excuse a certain pedantry of exposition.

Of Hopkins' 'sprung rhythm,' Mr. Lewis writes. 'It is not perhaps quite accurate to term it an innovation, for it approximates to the rhythm of *Pier's Plowman* and the old nursery rhymes.' But Hopkins was working from a five-foot metre, which splits into 2 and 3; *Pier's Plowman* is in four-foot metre, regularly divided into 2 and 2. The difference is vital. Go behind the shepherd of Malvern Hills, and listen to this metre as it was sung in the courts of princes. The northern poet will state his rhythmical theme thus:

Atli sendi / ar til Gunnars  
Once in royal / David's city.

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What his art requires is that the long line should be cut clean into two balancing halves, and that in each half the two feet should balance also. Balance, not correspond. He can therefore, still retaining his rhythmical scheme, write, or chant, immediately afterwards,

at górdum kom hann Gú ika / ok at  
Gúnnars hóllu  
her wárfare is accómplished / her iní-  
quity párdoned,

the pattern being effected, I suppose, by an alternation of crashing and hurrying syllables. But I do not see how this, or any corresponding, effect can be got in a rhythm which does not possess the strong central *cæsura*.

Mr. Lewis continues:

'Sprung rhythm differs [from standard rhythm] in the following ways. It is based on one syllable stressed in each foot: this syllable may stand alone in its foot, or it may be accompanied by a number of unstressed syllables, usually not more than four.' But, surely, standard rhythm is equally based on one syllable stressed in each foot (the rest of the foot being the unstressed syllable or syllables). What else, in a language with strong syllabic stress, can it be based on? What else creates the foot? 'Thus,' says Mr. Lewis, 'such [a line as]

No wonder of it: sheer plod makes  
plough down síllion

would have the same value, five stresses, as

When you shall these unlucky deeds  
declare.'

But of course it has: ever since Chaucer

it has. It is a perfectly straightforward decasyllable. But, with all respect to the fineness of a poet's ear, I cannot help thinking that Mr. Lewis has scanned it wrong. He speaks of *sheer plod* as 'successive stresses accentuated by the three unstressed syllables before them.' To my ear, there is a secondary stress on *it*; and none at all on *sheer*. In fact, successive stresses without a pause is a thing, I believe, the English voice can hardly compass,<sup>1</sup> and our speech does not permit a pause between adjective and noun, or genitive and noun. We can speak of a bláckbird or a black bírd. But not of a bláckbírd.

We can say

Búll! Dóg! Drúmmond beware,

because of the pauses. We cannot say

Búlldóg Drúmmond beware.

Therefore we cannot scan, as Mr. Day Lewis does,

Wórl'd's stránd, swáy of the sea:

unless, indeed, so far from 'approximating to speech rhythm,' we have recourse to a kind of 'incantatory' voice, not unlike that which converts the iambic

Abide with me

into the spondaic

'Erb, 'ide with me

of popular devotion. And as Hopkins, like Blake, seems to have composed with a musical setting sometimes in his mind, it is, I suppose, quite possible that this 'incantatory' voice was the medium in which he worked.

So again when Mr. Lewis says that

<sup>1</sup> The reason being that the discharge of energy involved in stress requires a re-charging interval

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'no such lively representation of the hover and swoop of a kestrel could be achieved within the limits of [standard rhythm] as we find in the line

High there, how he hung upon the rein  
of a wimpling wind.'

I admit the skill of the line, but again to my ear, though a very bold piece of resolution, it leaves the common decasyllabic ground tone almost untouched. If Hopkins had written *on the rein*, I should have said quite untouched: I do not think the pæon is a legitimate resolution in our decasyllable, for the reason that our difficulty in managing a phrase of the form 000 – or – 000, causes it to split on a secondary stress into two trochees or two iambs, whereby the voice is put out of step. It follows, therefore, that, conceived as a variation on the standard decasyllable, the line does not scan. But is this surprising? Hopkins was a fine poet, but a man who can rhyme *portholes* with *mortals* is capable of anything.

A cautionary tale comes sometimes into my mind in these discussions. Thirty years ago, the badge and banner of every truly cultivated person was a saying of Leonardo's

Cosa bella mortal passa e non d'arte.

It was supposed to be as unfathomable as it was untranslatable, and any poor child of reason who had asked what exactly it meant would have been very severely dealt with. Then Mr. Eric Maclagan gave the show away. He looked at the manuscript and discovered that Leonardo had only jotted down the sensible but not very spectacular line of Petrarch:

Cosa bella mortal passa e non dura,

and that what the world had been worshipping was Leonardo's bad writing. My own conviction is that much that is admired to-day is simply incompetent versification, and that some of our younger poets are wasting time and tissue – just as Sidney and Spenser did – in trying to force the genius of the language to perform evolutions outside its range, and thereby severing the very roots of poetry.

Unhappy verse, the witness of my unhappy state!

Spenser was proud of that line. And what would have become of English poetry if Gabriel Harvey had allowed him to write much more of it?

In particular, I believe that in their main principle Hopkins and those who derive from him are entirely wrong. The decasyllable must always be written as a classical metre, with extreme caution and tact, both as to resolution and inversion. It has no native singsong behind it to affirm the rhythm: it is too long to be taken as a unity and too short to be divided into self-subsistent parts: it requires, therefore, and always has required, a very delicate balancing and interplay of groundwork and fingering to keep it from dingdong on the one side and gabble on the other. It is not a thing to play tricks with. The true field for experiment lies among the strongly cadenced measures, whether the Old Northern, which Mr. Sitwell writes with such a fine balance of fluidity and precision; or the Old Hundredth and its fellows – from *Oranges and Lemons*, which Darley, Meredith, and more lately Mr. Auden have used so effectively, to this of Mr. Day Lewis' own.

## Tunes Ancient and Modern

That cannot be till two agree,  
Who long have lain apart:  
Traveller, know, I am here to show  
Your own divided heart.  
*I will you take, and lady make,  
As shortly as I can;  
Thus have you won an Earl's son,  
And not a banished man.*

Hail! Native Muse!

And there is plenty more in that cupboard.

Indeed, I would confidently appeal from Mr. Lewis the critic to Mr. Lewis the poet. Like Spenser, having argued himself into bad verse, he writes himself back into good verse.

Do not expect again a phoenix hour  
The triple-towered sky, the dove complaining,  
Sudden the rain of gold, and hearts' first ease  
Tranced under trees by the eldritch light of sundown.

Here, I think, one is justified in assuming a certain influence both from

Hopkins and Mr. Eliot, which has operated to loosen and supple the structure. But the influence has been absorbed and reduced to its proper proportions: the verse in its general movement is of the ancestral pattern. To apply a simple test, Sidney could have read it at sight, and recognized a brother poet. But what would Sidney have made of this?

Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual only for one time

And only for one place.

I rejoice that things are as they are and  
I renounce the blessed face  
And renounce the voice  
Because I cannot hope to turn again.  
Consequently I rejoice having to construct something  
Upon which to rejoice.

What does Mr. Lewis make of it? A brilliant handling of the decasyllable? Or just Pish?



# One Night in a City

by Norah Hoult

---

THIS is the story that the young girl told me.

I had gone to see her, because I learnt that she hadn't been well, and I thought it was lonely for her since she lives by herself in a room at the top of a big house near the city.

She was sitting up when I arrived, and I asked her how she had slept the night before.

'Indeed,' she said, 'and I didn't sleep a wink. But for all that there was enough doing for me to be kept well entertained.'

'How was that?' I asked her, and then she started talking.

'I knew there wasn't a wink of sleep in me, so about half-past midnight I got up and sat in the chair by the window. It was quiet, for the trams and buses had all stopped, and I thought of everybody gone home and in their beds.

'But they hadn't all gone home. For a train came in at the station below bringing people back from a seaside excursion. It wasn't that the trippers were noisy: it was just that at one moment the street was deserted, and the next there were forms standing there under the pillars and on the steps leading out of the station, and drifting down the streets. They lingered round not saying much, for they were tired.

The children were dragging after their mothers and fathers, and the mothers were walking with bent shoulders so that you'd pity them trudging away with never a tram to take them home. Well, quite soon, they had all gone their ways and were out of sight.

'The next thing that happened was something that gave me a laugh. First of all I heard voices singing *Three Little Maids from School*, and then I saw that the singing came from three men in evening dress who were marching up the street, and not marching so steadily, I might say! Well, that's nothing uncommon, but what gave me the laugh was the way they all stopped just where Hay Street turns off, and each of them shook hands with each other, and said good-bye. They lifted their top hats to each other as if they were performing some grand final ceremony, and then, lo and behold, on went my three brave men as if they'd never said farewell at all. I wondered what time it would be before they'd really make up their minds to part, and if each of them would find their way safely at the end of it, and what their wives would be after saying to them.

'There was nothing but small odd things for a while after. A man and a very finely dressed-up girl with yellow

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curls came up, and leaned against the railings belonging to the school opposite. They stood talking in low voices and looking each other up and down. Then round the corner came a file of four men, poor down and outs, walking between two Salvation Army officers. They'd be on their way to the shelter above, I suppose. The Salvation Army man at the back stopped and spoke to the man and girl; they laughed and turned away from him; then the file went on again.

'Soon away went the couple. All got very quiet. I could just hear the strains of the band from the dance hall near, and I knew they were having a late night. A little breeze blew and rustled the leaves in the school playground. One or two late cars shone along the road, but they were soon gone, and mostly it was still as if everything was waiting.

'It must have been about half-past two when the queerest thing of the whole night happened, a thing I won't ever forget, the way maybe I'll be forgetting everything else.

'A man came along the street. I saw him plainly as he came round the corner, the way one sees a few people who catch the eye suddenly. He was tall with bent shoulders; and he had a cap pulled down over his face, and a scarf round his neck. His coat was very ragged, and his shoes made a shuffling, sliding sound as he walked. He crossed the road towards me, and then I saw that the sole was nearly off one of the shoes, and that the other was tied together with a piece of string.

'The next thing, I saw him, to my astonishment, turn in and go up the steps of the house next door, which,

like most of the houses in this street, is a private hotel. He stood in the doorway, so that I couldn't see him. But I heard him give a knock, not a loud knock and the door did not open. But I heard him speak.

'He said "I want a bed for the night." Then he answered himself. "You have no bed for me; you are full up." He went out of the gate and then in again at the next one, and knocked again. His knock sounded clear, for there was no one passing at the time. I leant out of the window, and heard his voice again:

' "Have you a bed for the night?"

' "We have no bed."

' "You are an hotel, but you have no bed - all right. You are sorry, but you have no room."

'He went out muttering a little, and I stared after him bewildered, for I tell you it was the queerest thing to hear him answering his own questions before a door that had not opened. He went on again to a third hotel and there I was leaning right out of the window with my ear cocked. And it was the same talk he had with himself:

' "I want a bed for the night."

' "We have no bed."

' "I am very tired."

' "We have no bed."

' "Is there no place for me to sleep?"

' "We are sorry."

'With that he came out, his head thrust down on his chest; after giving one nod he crossed the street. He went and leaned by the railings at almost the same spot where the man and girl had stood talking. His shoulders were bowed and he was half-turned away from me. He stood there all alone in

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the silence for a long, long while, and if it were crazy itself he was, you couldn't but pity him. It must have been nearly an hour he stood there; for my heart was troubled by him, and I kept looking out.

'Then the heavy steps of a policeman came round from above. It was only when he came up that the man seemed to notice, for he sort of stiffened. The policeman passed and the man watched him. Then the policeman turned, and came slowly back. He seemed as if he were going to speak to the poor man. But he went a little way past, and then turned and stared hard. And with that the man drew himself together and walked off, making down the road. The policeman stood looking after him till he turned the corner and was out of his sight. Then the policeman himself went off, and after a minute I couldn't see the poor, queer fellow any longer.

'I was thinking about him with sorrow for his homelessness, but almost immediately another comic thing happened.

'Another of those gay gentlemen who had stayed out very late celebrating something came along. When he got to the lamp-post opposite, he stopped dead and took out his watch. He looked first at his watch, and then he looked up at the light. He puzzled me at first, and then it came to me of a sudden that he thought the lamp was a clock, and he couldn't make out at all why it was that he couldn't see the time by it. I had to laugh out aloud at the thought of him making such an exhibition of himself, though, of course, he didn't hear me. At last he put the watch back in his pocket, shook his

head as if he were giving up a bad job, and went on.

'What was the next? Oh, I remember! I stared across at a window a little way down the street. I looked at it, because there was a light in it, and I wondered to myself if there was anyone there who was sick like me, only much more so. For this asthma of mine is nothing very much at all. I thought of this person watching for the night to pass, and finding the hours very heavy.

'Then I must have lost myself a little, for it's the sound of taxis I hear next, and then a woman's scream comes, so that I look out of the window sharply to see what was happening. It was the people coming out of the dance hall. They were in evening dress, and one or two were singing some song, and others laughing in the distance. One man was very drunk, or very ill, and had to be carried to the car that his friends had got. A woman came after him crying as if there had been some disturbance, and then another woman in a red silk shawl followed her, and put her hand on her arm, comforting her. They went out and started to walk down the street; then two men came after them and caught them up as they reached the corner of the road. For a few minutes they stopped and talked; one man kept waving his hands about as if he were explaining something in a very earnest way; then all the four went on together.

'Most of the others had cleared off by this time, and I thought that they had kept it up very late this time, for now everything was getting light, and the lamps looked dim. I looked at

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my watch and was surprised to find that it was nearly five in the morning, and I thought "Well in five and twenty minutes the street lamps will go out, and time too, for they are looking faded against the whitening sky." Then I remember I saw an old woman come along with a big sack. She stopped at our dustbin, and putting the sack down began to rummage among the things. She was particular, and indeed her sack was very full, for the only thing that I could see her take was a tin, and I wondered what use she would put that to. She doesn't mind about the one next door, though she stops a while lower down, but I don't bother looking at her, for by now I am feeling very tired and a little depressed some way. I wondered if I lay on my bed would sleep come.

'But I stayed on at the window, and I am glad I didn't go back to bed.'

The young girl stopped and laughed reminiscently, and I smiled back wondering what was coming next.

'Ah, sure, it's only a silly thing, I don't like to be telling you.'

'Go on,' I said, and she went on.

'Well, there was a great thundering rattle along the street, and it was the dustbin men in their cart. They seemed in great spirits when they stopped at the top of the street talking and laughing, so that I was cheered looking at them. Then they came on again and made their next stop here. When one man came to our dustbin, what should he see on top but a shoe from an old pair of ladies' slippers. He took it out and hugged it to him, rolling his eyes in the funniest way so that the other two men stood laughing

at him. Then all of a sudden he saw me, and, pointing at the shoe, looked up to ask was it mine. I smiled and shook my head, but he looked as if disappointed and wanting me to say "yes." Well, he was not very young, but he had a nice smiling face. And so what did I do for a bit of divilment, but take a rose out of the vase on the table behind me and throw it out to him. Was that dreadful?'

'Not a bit,' I said. 'Why should it be?'

'Well, anyway, it fell into the area and the dustman made a great to-do rubbing his eyes, and rushing up to the railings, making as if he would throw himself after it. So I threw him another quickly, and this time he caught it and kissed it with great gallantry for all the world as if we were playing *Romeo and Juliet*. Then he put it into his buttonhole, and got back into the cart, which started off, for the others were waiting on him. And the very last I saw of him, there he still was, turned round towards me, blowing kisses and hugging the old slipper.'

We laughed together, and then I said, 'That must be near the end of the story.'

'Why so?'

'Because romance always finishes a story.'

'You could not call the like of that romance,' said the young girl. But she blushed a little. Then she went on quickly, 'Well, true enough, it was almost morning by then, for the workmen's tram came clanging along soon. And then in a short while there were the people going to early Mass, flitting along like shadows with their heads down, little women dressed mostly in

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black. In their footsteps were the early chars., with their black shiny bags well gripped, ready to take every scrap they could lay hands on. Then a woman came out of the house opposite, the one that had the light in the window all night, and began to clean down the steps in a quick way as if she didn't want anyone to see. When she'd gone in, a page-boy came out of the hotel

next door, just in his shirt sleeves and trousers, and stood looking up and down and whistling; he and I watched a motor car and a few bicycles going past; then I said to myself, "Well, the whole city is waking up at last, and getting ordinary. So I'll tumble into bed."

'And high time, too, I should think,' said I.

# The Poetry of Paul Valéry

by A. E. Mackay

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PAUL VALÉRY is the foremost exponent of Symbolism to which he has given a new and vital significance. This is partly due to the fact that he is both a poet and a mathematician – a rare combination of which Edgar Poe said that a man might be a poet or a mathematician and at the same time a fool, but that no man could be all three.

Indeed, the poet who is also a mathematician will have this advantage over other poets, that he will not need to search for, or be influenced by, the systems of thought or philosophy of others. For if he is a true mathematician his own mind will provide him with speculations or problems, a fabrication of thought, from which his poetry may take what it needs, and which will provide the most suitable soil for its growth.

There can be no doubt that poetry and mathematics meet in the highest realms of imagination, and it is the distinction and power of Valéry's best work that it lives in this rare atmosphere. It is, however, rather as a metaphysical psychologist than a pure philosopher that Valéry visualizes the universe. His problem is psychological rather than abstract, and we shall see that words lead him, as figures do the mathematician, into new regions of

thought. Words are for him symbols of the actions and reactions of the mind; and as Balzac visualized and revealed the *Comédie Humaine*, Valéry discovers the *Comédie Intellectuelle*, of which he says that 'It has not yet found its poet.'

The expression of abstract ideas through concrete images has always been the central preoccupation of most forms of art. It may indeed be argued that all art tends towards the expression of abstract thought; or to the essential presentation of abstract or 'pure' ideas, through sensual images. Thus the idea of 'pure' poetry will recommend itself as much to the mathematician as to the poet, particularly as its idea and content will have metaphysical significance impossible to separate from its form and technic. And in the present state of linguistic development it will be seen that such poetry readily inclines to symbolism. In Valéry we find a poet expressing through symbolism a metaphysical, almost mathematical, knowledge of the play of mind and chance, the constantly changing values of the ego or self in the presence of the universe; and this is always found in his most characteristic works such as *La Jeune Parque*, *La Pythie* and *Fragment de Narcisse*.

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To become familiar with Valéry's intellectual problems we must study his prose works, of which only a brief summary can be given here. In the earliest of these, *Introduction à la Méthode de Leonard de Vinci*, first published in 1895, Valéry has amply explained his ideas. He introduces the reader to a world of relationships, of relativity of mind and matter, of considerations of art, technic and style; while he depicts a type of supreme artist-creator, a sort of abstract of genius, whose method evolves schemes and formulas for all possible types of thought and action. *Une Soirée avec M. Teste*, first published in 1895, deals again with a master mind who has so developed thought to a perfect science that expression has become unnecessary; a type to which at one time Valéry himself seemed to tend, and which is, after all, the logical outcome of the ideas of the fine and fastidious Latin minds of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most perfect of Valéry's prose works are the two Socratic dialogues, *Eupalinos ou L'Architect* and *L'Ame et La Danse*, both published in 1923. In these harmonious and rhythmic prose poems we find an enriched and enlarged exposition of the Parnassian and Symbolist creeds. 'Absolute' art in repose, and 'absolute' art in motion are the central themes coloured with æsthetic and philosophic considerations. As the architect is master of his materials, the dancer is mistress of the movements of her body, so the poet possesses words with their intellectual and musical values. We have only to read these dialogues to marvel at the poise and beauty of their style, and we are forced

to conclude that Anglo-Saxon critics, and in particular Mr. Edmund Wilson in *Axel's Castle*, have considerably underrated Valéry's prose.

In *Variété* (1924) and *Variété II.* (1929), and in various essays and letters, Valéry proves himself to be a critic of penetration and sensibility, and his essays on La Fontaine and Baudelaire are of special charm and value. Other prose works of interest are: *Cahier B* (1910), *Situation de Baudelaire* (1924), *Littérature* (1929), *La Conquête Allemande* (1915), *Fragments Sur Mallarmé* (1924), *Lettres de Paul Valéry* (1925), etc. – and *L'Idée Fixe ou Deux Hommes A La Mer*, which appeared last year.

In many essays and letters Valéry has spoken of the 'métier' of the poet and of his own poetic creed, and nowhere has he done so with greater significance and charm than in his Avant-Propos to M. Lucien Farbre's *Connaissance de la Déesse*. Literary criticism is indeed enriched by this clear and profound explanation of the origin, function and development of symbolism which culminates in the idea of 'pure' poetry, independent of all 'subject,' freed from sentimentality and the grosser effects of eloquence. A state of perfection which can be passed through but scarcely dwelt in – as the hand passes through flame; an 'absolute' poetry which, says Valéry, 'can only proceed by marvellous exceptions.' To have attained this state of perfection was indeed the glory of Mallarmé, who with his disciples set out *repandre de la musique leur bien* and whose art absorbed *toute la joie naturelle d'être poète* to leave only *l'orgueil de n'être jamais satisfait*. What they

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achieved was of immense value to modern poetry, for they suggested so many innovations, opened up so many new vistas, that they made room for younger men to pursue for themselves paths along the fringes of this enchanted forest without troubling to explore its arduous and mysterious depths. Indeed, these younger men were sometimes, as Valéry says, 'to mistake our specially set difficulties for mere liberties.'

It is to the conquest of those self-imposed difficulties that Valéry particularly applies himself. In a conversation with M. Lefevre (*Entretiens avec Valéry. Lefevre*), he says, 'All judgment that one wishes to make on a work of art ought to take into consideration before anything else the difficulties which the author has set himself to overcome. One might say that these voluntary obstacles when one reconstructs them reveal at once the degree of the poet's intellect, the quality of his pride, the delicacy and the despotism of his nature.' This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that for Valéry poetry implies complete discipline of the mind in pursuit of precise and definite ends. For he adopts and freely chooses all the rules of classical French prosody, and in adopting them gives them new colour and new vitality. Indeed, he says of traditional forms that they have the merit of 'defining very simply an absolute world of expression.' And the point of view – that by placing arbitrary limitations on form the concentration of the poet is increased – has a definite æsthetic value. Against this may be set the more modernist point of view that by creating its own form within the conscious-

ness of the poet, each poem may claim a vitality and integrity of its own. And this latter consideration seems to be the no less arduous and exacting problem of the poets of the future.

Valéry's strength and originality therefore consist in what he does within classical forms, and not in creating new forms. He is a classicist and a symbolist, and his kinship and discipleship to Mallarmé are too well known to need comment. Mallarmé, one of the most fastidious and profound poets of any time, is too often dismissed in this country as a mere 'musician,' and the delicate and subtle thought which is enshrined in his music is more often overlooked than overheard. To the exquisite music of his master Valéry was to add the full orchestration of precise and brilliant images, symbols of a rich Carthusian thought. Like Mallarmé he passes from image to image, and the more intellectual his poetry, the more striking and original his images become. In considering Valéry's technic, and in particular in *La Jeune Parque*, we are constantly reminded of the influence of Racine, of whom he has said: 'I only appreciated Racine (very late) in becoming aware of the trouble that he must have had and the skill spent in overcoming it' (*Reponses*, 1917). And M. Lefevre has pointed out that Valéry combines a sort of Racinean euphemism with a Mallarmian use of ellipse, and this makes a sufficiently subtle explanation of phrases which others less well informed have considered affected or hermetic.

The *Album des Vers Anciens* contains all the poems written before 1898, after which date Valéry stopped



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writing poetry for twenty years. This volume was published in 1920, three years after Valéry had broken silence with the chief of his poetical works, *La Jeune Parque*. The *Album* consists of a collection of symbolist and parnassian poems evoking memories of Hérédia, Baudelaire, Gauthier and Mallarmé. As M. Thibaudet has said it might have been called *Narcisse Parle* – the title of one of the poems – for the central motive of the whole book is the meditation on the mind and substance of the poet by the poet himself: –

‘Et là-haut, dans la lumière immense  
Nous nous sommes trouvés en pleurant  
O mon cher compagnon de silence.’

Indeed we find in all these intensely musical early lyrics a world of consciousness occupied by the meditation of self, a world in which nature and sentiment are transposed into metaphysical and intellectual meditation: –

‘L’âme enfin sur ce faite a trouvé ses  
demeures  
O de quelle grandeur, elle tient sa  
grandeur  
Quand mon cœur soulevé d’ailles  
intérieures  
Ouvre au ciel en moi-même une  
autre profondeur!’

In a prose note at the end of the volume the poet says: – ‘I abandon myself to the adorable allurements of reading living where words lead me –. I feel each word in all its force for having waited indefinitely for it.’ And in these poems, particularly in the sonorous melody of *La Fileuse*, *Valvins* and *Eté*, the texture of the lines is wrought to great perfection, and assumes an importance which cannot be

ignored in the history of modern verse. Every sound, every letter and word is calculated, weighed in meticulous composition, and plays its part as a note in music, not only in the metaphysics of technic, but in the very soul and fabric of the poem. Form and content being so wrought together that in the Aristotelian sense the soul is the shape.

*La Jeune Parque*, first published in 1917, is sometimes considered to be the most obscure poem in the French language. An English critic has said that in fifty years’ time no one will bother about the meaning of it. But I think it would be nearer probability to say that everyone interested in poetry will know exactly what it means. We may suppose that the difficulty of exact interpretation of the poet’s meaning is the same as in the case of the exact interpretation of music. And in a sense this poem is as universal in its application as a symphony of Beethoven. In both there is the discovery of new worlds. In Beethoven’s music – somewhere in the blue night beyond the moonlit blossom; in Valéry’s poem – within the secret and elusive self.

Valéry has told us that the exact interpretation is no great matter. In a letter to M. André Fontainas written in 1917, he modestly describes the poem as an exercise and says: – ‘For this poem I imposed upon myself laws and constant observances which constitute its veritable object. It is really an exercise, willed, revised and worked. . . . Those who know how to read me will read an autobiography in the form. The substance matters little. . . . It is from language that I started,

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at first to make this piece the length of a page. . . . I hold that my principal gain is in the observations made in the course of this long work.' This explains very typically Valéry's attitude, because for him words have the significance which figures have for the philosophical mathematician, they are symbols of the most elusive thought. Moreover, speaking of the subject of the poem, Valéry says: - 'Remember that the real subject is the painting of a sequence of psychological substitutions, and in the main the change of consciousness during the length of a night. . . . I have tried my best and at the price of unbelievable work to explain the modulation of a life. . . .' These remarks of the author are of special interest because *La Jeune Parque* is the first poem of symphonic magnitude to have the consciousness or awareness of self as its avowed central theme. Moreover, the poet is a worthy disciple of Descartes, for this statue of life *The Young Fate* is a complete picture of the inner life of the mind, the inner life of a being of cosmic characteristics and consciousness. That is to say that the psychic awareness evolved by physical images seems to evoke a sort of universal rhythm. Nor are we surprised to learn that the poem was first conceived under the influence of Gluck's music. Indeed, the opening lines have the magic of such music: -

'Qui pleure là, sinon le vent simple, à  
cette heure  
Seule avec diamants extrême . . .  
Mais qui pleure  
Si proche de moi-même au moment  
de pleurer?'

And towards the end of the first passage there is a superb invocation to the stars: -

'Tout puissants étrangers, inévitables  
astres  
Qui daignez faire luire au lointain  
temporel  
Je ne sais quoi de pur et de surnaturel;  
Vous, qui dans les mortals plongez  
jusques aux larmes  
Ces souverains éclats, ces invincibles  
armes,  
Et les élancements de votre éternité.'

Or again we are introduced to a world of classic but strangely fresh imagery such as: -

'Harmonieuse Moi, différente d'un  
songe,  
Femme flexible et ferme aux silences  
suivis  
D'actes purs. . . . Front limpide, et  
par ondes ravis,  
Si loin que le vent vague et velu les  
achève  
Longs brins légers qu'au large un vol  
mêle et soulève,  
Dites! . . . J'étais l'égale et l'épouse  
du jour,  
Seul support souriant que je formais  
d'amour  
A la toute puissante altitude adorée.'

The constantly varied harmonies of vowels; alliteration, assonance and dissonance are used to perfection throughout the poem: -

'Le gel cède à regret ses derniers  
diamants.  
Demain, sur un soupir des bontés  
constellées  
Le printemps vient briser les fontaines  
scellées  
L'étonnant printemps rit' . . .

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Indeed, quotation might be endless, for subtle harmonies and thought-compelling images are found on every page, and the poem ends with a magnificent pæan to the sea at dawn. An analytical summary of *La Jeune Parque* would take too much space in this brief article. Such a summary has been admirably made by M. Albert Thibaudet, whose book on Valéry is a work of much interest.

*La Jeune Parque* remains an unrivalled achievement of this century, the furthest exploration in a solo flight across the uncharted spaces of the mind. As the romantic poet discovered his relationship with nature, so Valéry has made a no less important discovery – the revelation of the mind in relation to its own problem, and the relativity of its own problem to the universe.

In the volume of poems published as *Charmes* in 1922, Valéry touches again on almost all the motives of *La Jeune Parque*. Among the longer poems of this volume are two of sovereign importance, *Ebauche D'Un Serpent* and *Le Cimetière Marin*, both of which deal in an entirely original manner with world-old themes. In *Ebauche D'Un Serpent*, a deeply studied composition in the form of an ode, we find Valéry meditating on the mutability of the inner world, on the dissolution of being into movement and movement into nothingness. The poem is a monologue of the serpent in Eden – a tragic figure sometimes burlesque, sometimes sinister, who reflects with subtle reasoning on the creation. The birth of time has ruined eternity, number has destroyed the unity of God, Vanity was the first Cause: –

'Cieux, son erreur! Temps sa  
ruine!  
Et l'abîme animal, béant! . . .  
Quelle chute dans l'origine  
Etincelle au lieu du néant! . . . '

Furthermore the created self is in opposition to the self who created: –

' . . le premier mot de son Verbe  
Moi! . . Des astres le plus superb  
Qu'ait parlés le fou Créateur,  
"Je suis! . . . Je serai! . . . J'il-  
lumine  
La diminution divine  
De tous les feux du Séducteur!" '

Satan, the spirit of evil, has in fact triumphed: –

'En vain, Vous avez dans la fange,  
Pétri des faciles enfants.'

Eve is described in verse of vivid beauty, and original images are found throughout the poem, such as: –

'Quel silence battu d'un cil!'

Indeed no work of Valéry's is more musical or more accomplished. The poem ends with a pæan of praise to the Tree of Knowledge: –

'Tu peut repousser l'infini –  
Qui n'est fait que de ta croissance  
Et de la tombe jusqu'au nid  
Te sentir toute Connaissance!'

Throughout the whole piece there is a sort of dynamic power of expression which carries the verse on the wave of intense passion, and the last strophe which was added in the second addition, in its more exalted despair, is a

*Note.*—The poem has been translated into English by Mark Wardle with an Introduction by T. S. Eliot (Cobden Sanderson, 1924.)

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superb and final challenge to the  
*Toute-Puissance du Néant.*

*Le Cimetière Marin* is a metaphysical meditation almost Bergsonian in its conception, and a deep and penetrating peace, the peace of southern noon, broods over it: –

‘La scintillation sereine sème  
Sur l’altitude un dédain souverain.’

Life and death are both in this calm: –

‘Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance  
Comme en délice il change son  
absence

Dans une bouche ou sa forme se  
meurt,  
Je hume ici ma future fumée,  
Et le ciel chante à l’âme consumée  
Le changement des rives en rumeur.’

It is the self that changes beneath the  
pure and eternal: –

‘Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement  
Je suis en toi le secret changement.’

And the dead are now one with the  
changeless universe: –

‘Tout va sous la terre et rentre dans le  
jeu.’

The poem as a whole is of profound metaphysical and psychological significance, and is also an unsurpassed picture of the sun-baked landscape with its shining sea and burning sky described with such beauty of detail as: –

‘ici venu, l’avenir est paresse.  
L’insecte net gratte la sécheresse  
Tout est brûlé, défait, reçu dans  
l’air. . . .’

Such perfection of means to an end show Valéry to be a truly great poet.

In the *Fragment du Narcisse* we have the same subject as in *Narcisse Parle* of the *Album des Vers Anciens*, a theme of essential interest to the Symbolist, which is treated by Valéry in a characteristic manner. In the passage beginning: –

‘Fontaine, ma fontaine, eau froidement  
présente –’

we are reminded of the grace and rich dream-like tapestry of La Fontaine’s *Adonis*, and again echoes of Racine charm us in the sonorous music of: –

‘Je chercherais en vain ce que j’ai de  
plus cher,  
Sa tendresse confuse étonnerait me  
chair

Et mes tristes regards, ignorants de mes  
charmes,

A d’autres que moi-même adres-  
seraient leurs larmes.’

Of *La Pythie*, a magnificent esoteric ode, much might be said. Never in the history of modern verse has the science of words been carried to such sensitive perfection, and the reader is borne on the wings of enthusiasm to the final rapture: –

‘Illumination, largesse!  
Voici parler une sagesse  
Et sonner cette auguste voix  
Qui se connaît quand elle sonne  
N’être plus la voix de personne  
Tant que des ondes et des bois!’

The shorter poems in this volume are also worthy of the title *Charmes*, for in them ideas and words are used in a characteristically symbolic manner. *L’Aurore*, *Les Pas*, and *L’Abeille* have for theme the mind of the poet and his ‘métier’ and are faultless in imagina-

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tive content and music. Perhaps the most original poem in the collection is the *Cantique des Colonnes*, while the most amusingly symbolic is *L'Ode Secrète*. *Palme* has a quiet and balanced beauty, and something of the strange nostalgic glory of *Le Cimetière Marin*.

To sum up, we may say that Valéry is the poet of the modern and complex ego or self. As he has penetrated and analyzed the realms of the human spirit, and given a new significance to developments of the mind through symbolic use of sensual images, so also he has studied and perfected to his own use the laws of poetic technic, and has created new beauty in verbal music, through the use of almost mathematical æsthetics in the texture of his lines within classical forms. Whether he is the last great poet to work in classical metres, or whether he is to be considered the forerunner of a possible revival of classic forms, does not in the least affect his merit as a poet. His importance is due to the fact that he has welded thought and music into a spiritual force of cosmic significance, creating as it were new vistas where 'self' merges and resolves into the purity of universal mind. No other living poet has achieved this, and in doing so Valéry establishes a new

development in modern poetry. In his work the symbolist and metaphysical tendencies in modern art find their most adequate expression; and thought and music blend to create a truer definition of 'pure' poetry than has perhaps ever been attained. And this in an age when poetry tends, both in France and England, to divide itself into the metaphysically prosaic or the musically frivolous.

Thus in Valéry's poems a new development has sprung from Symbolism. Poetry once again enters into its essential kingdom, the dominion of the mind revealed through the senses by verbal music. It has turned from trivialities to realities, and these realities are seen to be relativities. The oldest truths of humanity rise into new and radiant splendour in the beauty of *La Jeune Parque*. Poetry again concerns itself with the inner being, the hidden and sacred fire in the innermost mind of man. Nor is it too much to hope that it may again become, to impoverished humanity, the essential solace and the central necessity which it has been throughout the ages. So that it is not only a personal possession but also a new source of knowledge of self and the universe.

# Dialogue

by Elizabeth Bibesco

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‘I AM your wish and your pain, but never your desire.’  
‘You are the flame of my spirit.’ ‘The flame is blue  
And man must live and die by some crimson fire.’  
‘But I love you.’

‘Crystal pure is your being as the mountain air.’  
‘The sky is blue.’  
‘I want some molten splendour that I can share.’  
‘My love is you.’

‘My hurrying pulse bids you hurry, but your smile is slow.’  
‘Love knows no hours.’  
‘Soft and hushed are your kisses as flakes of the falling snow.’  
‘My lips are yours.’

‘You are the fret of my fever, the ache of my urgency.’  
‘You are my breath.’  
‘You are leaving my life behind me, content with eternity.’  
‘Love knows no death.’

# ‘What Can I Do?’

by A. E. Coppard

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AT the age of forty Dr. Coventry, a sandy-haired man with sallow face and red ears, married a lady ten years younger than himself, but by the time he was fifty he succumbed to a disability that left him too unwell to go on prescribing for people who were generally less ill than he was. What should he do? He had a household, a business, and he had his wife and their child Roland, a fair-haired imp of seven still in charge of a nurse? Well, by the happy lottery marriage sometimes proves to be, his wife Miranda was also qualified as a doctor. Since the birth of their child, it is true, she had not practised beyond giving her husband some occasional assistance, but it was good fortune now to be able to hand over the surgery and the entire bunch of patients to the care of Miranda while he tried his hand at medical journalism.

In a year all was going well; the ex-doctor had not been able to realize his modest literary ambition, but Miranda, a sweet dark woman, had become the complete Esculapius, and what had loomed as a threat above their domestic prospect passed like a summer cloud.

‘But what about Roley? We ought to ship him off to a school now.’

‘O no,’ Miranda contended. ‘He is quite too young, and besides I . . . I couldn’t think of it yet, I couldn’t bear it.’

‘But, my dear! He is seven years old – isn’t he? – and a perfect green-horn still.’

‘Most decidedly he is not! You know he is only delicate.’

‘Delicate!’

‘He’s not at all strong, and we *must* keep him at home for a while longer.’

‘But the boy’s got to be educated!’

‘I know that, I know.’

‘Well then, he’s got to *be* educated!’

‘We can educate him, George; or I can. I took a degree long before I started medicine. Surely that’s qualification enough?’

‘O, I don’t doubt it, but it’s all very well. He’s not delicate at all, and you can’t do that sort of thing. Besides you’ve no time, and . . . and . . . it’s all very well you know.’

But Miranda was a woman with an overriding manner, full of maternal solicitudes, a passion for duty, and other absurd simplicities, while Coventry was now a man who had no passion for anything. ‘I wish I could do it. I wish I *wanted* to do something, anything,’ he lamented. ‘What *can* I do?’ For though not aged he had grown tired – that was part of his malady.

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‘Do this,’ or ‘Do that,’ Miranda entreated him, in despair at his lassitude, and he sighed lugubriously: ‘I’m too old for that sort of thing now.’

‘What nonsense, George!’

‘I tell you it *is* so, Miranda. You don’t know, you don’t understand. I studied very hard when I *was* studying, cut myself off from heaps of things I’m sorry for now, and then the practice, and then marriage, and then all the rest of it. I never had time to do a single thing I wanted to do – apart from medicine.’

‘You’ve plenty of time now.’

‘That’s it. I don’t seem to want to do *anything* now. When I was young, before I met you, I always wanted to read all those fellows like Isaac Newton and Herbert Spencer; I particularly wanted to read Gibbon’s *Roman Empire*, but I can’t do that *now*.’

‘Why not?’

‘It’s too late. No good.’

‘Read it, for heaven’s sake read it!’ Miranda impatiently cried. ‘Why, you are like that stupid old man in Dickens’ book, not the wooden-leg one – the other.’

‘Old! That’s just it, I *am* old, too old. I don’t mean I couldn’t spare the time now – I could, of course I could – but it would be wasted, you see. And the effort, too, for it would be a deuce of an effort now – thousands of pages! One should only read with the idea of absorbing the thing read – you know, right *into* yourself. It’s like adding a new angle to your perceptions, a new colour to whatever you are becoming. See what I mean? And that can’t happen to me any more – I mean I am hard now, I am set, I have stopped growing, I’ve ceased to acquire, and

it’s no good me reading anything now. I’ve had to give up and leave things to you. Don’t you understand? I’m finished; what I am now is all I’ve come to, all I can be, and it will have to do.’ With a miserable sense of futility he added: ‘It doesn’t amount to much.’

‘George, you *are* a fool,’ Miranda explained, ‘but you are not half as stupid as you make out. And what does reading matter when you have had a life of so much experience and worked so splendidly and done so much good?’

‘Experience!’ he exclaimed bitterly. ‘My experience made me sick, and I’ve nothing to show for what I’ve done.’

Miranda turned away sadly. ‘That’s rather a desolating thing to say to me,’ she whispered.

‘O,’ he protested, going to the bureau and fetching a pack of cards. ‘I didn’t mean you, Miranda, of course, I didn’t mean you, but there are things in a man’s inner life, quite other things, nothing to do with women, that women cannot realize.’

‘You’re very positive about it,’ she said airily.

‘I am,’ was the answer, ‘I am. And I don’t mind telling you that if I have the luck to get to heaven later on I shall feel ashamed about the books I’ve not read – even among the polite angels.’ And pushing a red lacquer table nearer the fire he laid the cards out for his game of patience.

Miranda left him to that pitiful amusement. It annoyed her, it enraged her. Good God, she would have liked to chop off his hands, or force him to wear gloves soaked in glue – anything



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to stop that further crass enfeeblement of his being!

In due time Roland's nurse was notified of her impending retirement, and, of course, she wept – not at the prospect of parting from her beloved charge, but from anxiety about her own future. The boy stood gazing up with wondering eyes as the tear drops slithered down her cheeks to her chin. He was fair-haired, with bright looks.

'I'm not crying,' she said in answer to his question. 'I'm not crying at all; it's . . . it's my eyes.'

'What's the matter with your eyes, Nanna?'

'I've got to have them seen to,' the sniffing girl explained, while the boy put his finger to her chin, and touched a drop that hung there. 'Run away now, in the garden.'

Some weeks later she left them for good and all. The master drove her to the station with Roland leaning against her in the back of the car, and they were merrily whispering together, for the little heathen was anticipating the delightful moment when she would say good-bye. She had actually promised him to cry once more! He would gaze on Nanna's face for the last time, and it would be streaming with those mysterious tears.

'You'll cry when we get there, Nanna, won't you? You *will* cry?'

At the station Coventry bought her a magazine, a fashion paper, and a block of chocolate to comfort her. He did not want a 'scene.' Some of the chocolate she broke up for the child.

'Write us a line sometimes,' Coventry said abruptly, with no wish for her to do anything of the sort, and she eagerly vowed to do so, though she

had no intention of keeping the promise.

'I'll write to *you*, Roley.'

'I can't read,' the boy complained. 'You know I can't.'

'Papa will read it for you,' she said. 'And you must send me a nice letter in answer.'

'I can't write,' said the boy.

'Ha, we'll manage that for you,' laughed his parent.

And then when the train had come snorting in, nurse (who for years had been known as Nannie Coventry, though her right name was Sophia Harding, and she was the daughter of a shoemaker now in an asylum) only waved her hand gaily to them from the carriage window, and while Roley gazed expectantly at her she shook her head – and smiled!

That was the last of Sophy Harding, and, she being gone, Mrs. Coventry, who was the kind of woman who treasured her old school books, took up the task of beguiling her son with the rudiments of knowledge. He was an apt pupil, indeed he was altogether too avid, for the eternal Why was ever on his lips. No answer ever seemed to satisfy him, it only aroused a further throng of enigmas beyond the patient Miranda's raveling: 'Why do some birds lay blue eggs, and some birds lay white eggs? Do the worms like ground? Why don't snakes have some legs?'

The boy's study was a large room with glass doors opening to the garden, a sunny room, the best room in the blessed house (as Mr. Coventry described it), and on the walls were pinned coloured cartoons of William Tell being careful, Robin Hood being

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brave, some Red Indians being cruel, and a fairy princess being beautiful. There were blue cupboards, red chairs, and a yellow table.

‘Mum, what do they call gas for?’

‘Gas is its name, Roley.’

‘Why is its name gas?’

‘That is what it is called, my darling. The name is a proper noun, but don’t bother about the name, I want to tell you how gas is made . . .’

And just then, before Miranda could begin this enlightenment, the telephone bell would ring and she would have to hasten away to relieve the pangs of someone smitten with stomach ache, leaving Roland meditating upon the problems of nidification and the peculiar appetite of worms. During these fleeting absences it was Mr. Coventry’s office to keep an eye on Roland, but somehow he could only take a somewhat frivolous view of his responsibility towards that incessant questioner.

‘Perkin Warbeck?’ he would hum and ha. ‘Let me see. . . . O, ah, yes. The scoundrel! A regular rascal! Do you know what he did? He poisoned his grandfather’s goat, so his majesty said unto him: “God may forgive you, but I never will!” And he was sentenced to the Tower of London, and had his head chopped off in the middle of the night.’

With a dubious frown Roland said: ‘Was it a nice goat?’

‘Nice! My goodness, as far as goats go it was the finest goat that ever you did see. A genuine billy. It had two horns of solid gold, four hoofs of solid silver, its hair was a sort of inky blue-black, and its eyes were as green as peas.’

‘Why did he kill it?’

‘It had varicose veins,’ replied the father, ‘and its blood bubbled.’

Mr. Coventry was in consequence speedily excommunicated by Miranda, and her remonstrations somehow (and to his own surprise) annoyed him.

‘What the devil does it matter *who* Perkin Warbeck was or what he did? The boy asked me, and I told him something he’ll never hear again. He won’t forget it.’

‘But lies!’

‘Fairy tales, Miranda.’

‘I want him to have facts.’

‘Such facts are useless.’

‘No truth is useless.’

‘And most of it is utterly dull. I’ve given him the picture of a goat, haven’t I? – and every time he sees a goat now he’ll think of Perkin Warbeck – won’t he? – and sooner or later he’ll find out all about him himself. It’s education by fable, not fact.’

‘O dear!’ snapped Miranda. ‘Do you suppose that anybody eating a hot cross bun thinks of Calvary?’

‘No indeed, that’s because . . .’

‘Please,’ said Miranda hurriedly, ‘don’t let’s talk about that.’

Day after day the invalid set out his patience cards on the red lacquer table, and hour after hour groaned at the unsatisfactory conclusions.

‘What shall I do now? I *do* want to do something still, but I’m hanged if I know what.’

Doctoring had brought him into so much contact with the gross, the envenomed, the feeble, that he was sick of them, and it repelled by the boils, the tumours, the refractory bowels, the spongy livers, the faces that had gone blue in the nose from swilling

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so much gin, and the wagging mouths that talked so much – about so little. Now, like the dyer's hand, he, too, was steeped in disease and loathed himself, his inertia, and the miscarriage of the hopes of youth when he had an eye and an appetite for so many things and trifling diversions swept upon him like some great adventure bawling from a news placard. The hopes had flickered out, he could not define them now (he had never been able to), and he felt he had been defrauded. Something had gone wrong, somewhere, he could not think how or when, only *he* was not to blame for *that*. Indeed he could not blame anything, nobody at all, and yet it was so damnably wrong, all of it – except little Roley. And Miranda.

Miranda was in the study instructing the boy about a battle.

'Mum, supposing two lots of soldiers was fighting in a war and there was a house in between 'em?'

'For *two* lots you must say *were*, darling, not *was*. Remember that, won't you?'

'And there were a house in between.'

'I'm afraid,' said Miranda, 'they would break down the house.'

'Not if there was some people in it!' protested the child, glancing up at the ceiling.

'Probably they would. They would have to.'

'And would they kill all the people?'

'I expect so.'

'Would they kill you, Mum?'

Miranda reflected a moment, and thought that perhaps she might not be killed. 'It all depends,' said she.

'They wouldn't kill me, would they, Mum?'

'O, no.'

'And supposing it wasn't a house, but only a church?'

'They would knock the church down, and that would be very wicked indeed.'

'Not if it was a big large church. They couldn't, I know.'

'O well,' Miranda conceded, 'they might not be able to then.'

'And it might have two teeny little windows like that,' pursued the child, holding up his two forefingers a few inches apart, 'and the soldiers could crawl through them.'

'I don't think they would do that, Roley.'

'And supposing the sky fell down bang on top of 'em?'

'No, darling, the sky wouldn't ever. The sky *can't* fall down.'

'But supposing it did, Mum, it would serve 'em jolly well right, wouldn't it?'

'Yes, perhaps so. On the other hand, Roley, they might only be doing their duty, poor fellows.'

The boy laughed softly and repeated: 'Jolly well right!'

Twice a week Roley had to visit Madame Pudowsky to receive some lessons in music. He had no talent for music and did not care to go, but Madame was a kindly old creature in spite of her queer misshapen face – it was so rounded in the jowl that she seemed to have far too many teeth. Often it looked as though she were on the verge of tears, but she only said to him: 'Are you 'appy, like me?' And would sit down at her grand piano and play him some bewildering sonata,

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with her two red stumpy-fingered hands pouncing upon the keys to drag out the reluctant sounds. To the top of the keyboard she would ripple with one hand, to the bottom of it she would rumble with the other, and then her fingers rushed together in the middle of the keys and undulated there as if she was darning the notes into some difficult pattern which gave her no pleasure at all but had to be done. ‘Choopong,’ she would exclaim to Roley; or ‘Fronk’ or ‘Dayboosy,’ but Roley had no notion of what it meant.

There came a time when Coventry actually began to immerse himself in a project in the empty room adjoining the study; Miranda and Roley at lessons would hear him sawing and tapping away at slabs of wood, dropping hammers on the bare floor, whistling, humming, sometimes even singing. A surgeon can always use his hands deftly, and at last poor pale Coventry had determined to build a toy house. He had drawn up plan after plan of chalets, castles, churches, and even taverns, but discarded them all on conceiving the pretty notion of making a miniature house, a replica of their own, the one they lived in – yes! Roley would love that. And Miranda too. So he carved and planed and hammered and glued, cut out the portico and roof, clapped them on the tiny walls, inserted real glass windows and minute doors, then painted it and even fixed a brass plate no bigger than a postage stamp on the pillar at the entry: *Dr. Miranda Coventry*.

Meanwhile Miranda continued to tease the infant’s mind with her sprigs of geography, history and arithmetic, until she was summoned to a ‘case’

and had to leave Roley to the problems that caused him to rest his flaxen head in his hands and wear out his elbows like a clerk in a drowsy old bank. Miranda would motor off to her patient, a mother or a father or a child, maybe a wealthy one, perhaps only a poor one, with a constant wonder in her mind at the parents she met and the casual way they treated their young. Some, the best, the humblest, seemed to have no grace of care for their children beyond a desire to provide them with the means of earning a livelihood that would soon offer them a security against want. Beyond that their ambition was pitiful to Miranda. They had adapted themselves so perfectly to their hard conditions that the conditions had become the harmony of their lives.

Then Miranda’s heart would well with maternal fondness – how could they let them go, how *could* they! Or perhaps the patient would be a wealthy one like old Thorneycroft whose vocation was the cultivation of beans for seed. He had had two sons, both had joined the army and both were killed in battle. And old Thorneycroft would discourse for twenty minutes on end wholly of beans, all varieties of the bean, the horse, the broad, the buck, the kidney and eke the runner, their tastes, shapes and colours, weights to a quart, their prices, prospects, the art of garnering and various tricks of the market. The modes of cooking them would be enlarged upon in all their psychological and digestive significance until Miranda’s soul reeled in a world without end and seemed to be crawling all fours with bleeding knees along a Golgotha of slaughtered beans, bean

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upon bony bean. In a mad moment she once asked him about the beanstalk grown by little Jack when he climbed up to confound the Giant. He gravely explained that it could not have been real, it must have been an enchanted one.

And then one day Miranda's husband quietly announced that he had finished the toy house. For weeks he had laboured on it without letting either Roley or Miranda see it. That he was only making a toy she knew, he had confessed as much, yet nothing would induce him to let them see him working on it and he had always locked the workroom door, not from any feeling of shame at being observed in so trivial an undertaking, but because he desired to carry out his creation entirely alone, unseen, without any suggestion or interference. He took a precious delight in it, it occupied his forlorn hours and fascinated him – and yet he insisted that any intrusion of a critical eye would destroy his desire to continue. This preposterous embargo annoyed Miranda; she was certain that Roland was yearning to assist his father in the construction.

'No, no, no!' Coventry had testily objected. 'He would only mess it all up and break it.'

'Well, what if he did?' she exclaimed.

'Good Lord, Miranda . . .!'

'What *would* it matter?' she cried.

And he couldn't explain, he could *not* explain the extraordinary importance of maintaining secrecy until the ripe moment for disclosure.

Here it was now! And Miranda was truly astonished by its meticulous accuracy and the charm of its minia-

ture resemblance. The windows were fixed fast, it is true, but you could see through them into every room. The doors opened and shut, though, of course, you could not get inside, you were too big. And the roof was not quite a perfect roof, for you had to lift it off and peer into the attic and the bedrooms and the place where the bath ought to be.

'How splendid! Roley, Look!'

The boy scarcely smiled; he had to be encouraged to inspect the many devices, and they puzzled him.

'Isn't it marvellous!' cried Miranda again.

The boy looked solemnly at his father: 'Why is it empty? There isn't anything inside.'

'O, but look!' Miranda was enthusiastic. 'The sweet little door. It opens and shuts, in and out, look!'

Roley looked: 'I can't go in,' he said, 'and it's all empty.'

Coventry drummed on the roof of the pretty toy with his finger tips: 'Humph, yes, you're right, it's empty. And that gives me an idea. I can go on, of course I can,' he said, with rising interest. 'It's no sort of a house as yet, you're right. I must furnish it now, that's what I'll do.'

The boy turned to his mother: 'Is it for me?'

'No,' interjected his father brusquely, 'it's not for you.'

'Why not? Of course it is!' Miranda was instantly antagonistic.

'But I made it for myself!' her husband stammered.

'For yourself! What do you want with it, what's the good of it to you, the silly childish thing? Don't be absurd, George, of course Roley can have it.'

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‘He shall not!’ the man angrily cried. ‘I don’t mind him looking at it sometimes, and so on, but I want to keep it. I made it. It’s not for him at all.’

Coventry’s absurd notion seemed to reach a depth of profundity, he dreadfully wanted to conserve his toy – he, a grown man! To Miranda’s abrupt mind the idea was as fantastic as the mighty effort itself, and much of a piece with George’s stupid complaints about his wasted life. His wasted life indeed! Merciful heavens, she had a farcical fleeting image of a bald child in spectacles, sitting on the bank of a pond, angling with a bent pin in hope to catch a whale! All his time and power, in youth and in prime, had been devoted to soothing the anguish of the weak, a real Samaritan fighting against death – and for himself, too, if he would only realize it. All this he had done, and it was no solace to him now. He had made this trumpery toy and was bemused by it. Men were mad, there could be no other explanation; utterly and entirely mad, George most certainly was. And he would not give up the toy.

He resumed work on it as though it were the New Jerusalem. All the winter he bent and carved and prised away with extravagant gusto; it kept him from melancholy, and he grew gay again. Spring came on and the fibres of Miranda’s patients, unprepared for brighter times, succumbed to chilly ailments; she was busy from morn to night, and harassed by the necessity of leaving Roley to pursue his studies alone.

‘I must leave you now,’ she would wail, ‘I’ve a thousand things to do, and

only one pair of hands to do them with.’ And away she would rush with a hunted look in her eyes, as though she could have borne with the hundred arms of Briareus and all of them whirling like the spokes of a bicycle.

Winter had been long and trying, suddenly it was May, and the slender almond trees were abloom in all the villa gardens. On the brightest morning of the year Coventry completed his *Magnum opus* and looked out, saw the sky blue above the roofs, the light golden. The mean slates wore a lustre, and even chimney pots, unregardful of sooty secrets, had put on a rosy pride. A new desire sprang up in him – to go wandering. Leaving the house, he strolled through the town until he gained the environs where the marsh was green between him and the sea.

He entered a path beside a cornfield, divided from the marshes by a row of sloe bushes and nettles. The sloe bushes had been creamy-thick with blossom, like the foam of a breaking wave, but a sharp fall of rain during the night had hacked at the sprigs of bloom until the small white petals had fluttered for refuge to the nettle leaves or fallen helplessly upon the moist pathway. The sun was in a flare now and the cornfield seemed to breathe hot breath. Thin skeins of woolly mist drew themselves languidly from the mawkish soil and, having nowhere else to go, crawled into the sky and left the fair green spikes of corn to a destiny that would land them finally in a baker’s oven.

‘Lord, what a lovely world!’ murmured Coventry; ‘Lord, Lord, what a relief to escape for a while from the

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damned house with its nauseating lunch at precisely 12.45, and the turmoil about puddings and vitamins and such domestic tomfoolery!' There were times when the sight of the doormat filled him with such hatred that he refused to wipe his boots on it.

A further idea struck his fancy and he turned back home again. Bursting into the study he found Roley alone, inviting as usual the corns to grow on his sharp young elbows.

'Come for a walk?'

The boy slithered down from his chair, put on his cap, and followed his father into the streets.

'We'll make a day of it, blest if we don't,' said Coventry, stopping at one shop to buy a pie, at another for apples, and still another for chocolate. They wandered into the marsh that lay along the coast and stretched for miles, an endless level which had no converse with anything save its own streams and the sea and the sky. The marsh opened to the sea, but traps of freshwater pools and springs lurked on it, with tods of dark rush everywhere, and thickets of dried reeds as high as a man. It was drained by a network of tributary dykes, and along the main dyke a high bank or sea wall followed the course of the loitering water. On the bank the child Roley walked behind his father, asking no questions and voicing no desire, and all was bright and peaceful. The whole campaign diffused a bright and sweet serenity; the further they wandered the brighter and sweeter it grew, spangled with dandelions glowing in the dark grasses, the very birds that could only chatter and cry seemed to imagine they were singing, and the more solitary the

marsh became, the more nearly it purveyed an infinite goodness. The mind, Coventry mused, was unable to adore anything unless it was immeasurable; immensity itself was goodness and purity and all the rest of it, though it was nothing until the mind could be nourished by it.

At a spot where the bank veered right up to the seashore they passed a yellow caravan beside a tavern called 'The Boat,' whose weathercock of a ship sat rusty on a pole, and a pretty gipsy girl on seeing Roley called out, 'Hallo, my duck!' Roley asked his father for an apple, and munched it as he trudged (Ahoy, there!) along the bank that roved inland again through marshes where the furze gleamed more golden than gold and a pool shone bright as the head of a rivet. Coventry began to sing (Ahoy, there!) and the child became amused and chattered.

'You know what's to-morrow, Dad?'

Coventry said: 'It's my birthday.'

'No, it's *my* birthday,' the boy protested, 'it's my birthday to-morrow.'

'All right, you have it then. I'll wait,' said his mysteriously lively father, who sang louder and louder as they advanced.

So in time they came to a round windmill built of old dun bricks. Alone and silent in the vast plain, its function was to direct tiny streams to the major water courses. It stood at the head of a dam of water twenty yards long, wide in the middle and tapering at each end like a coffin, and the grassy banks of the dam, covered with snow-white daisies, were pegged with rotting larch staves.

'Let's sit down——'

## ‘What Can I Do?’

At the foot of the dam a small tunnel conveyed the water through the bank behind them, and they rested on its low brick parapet.

‘And eat something,’ continued Coventry.

The mill was not working, its four sails were idle, the rusty wheel was motionless at the end of the dam, and the water was still. Sometimes a few bubbles would wriggle up from the muddy bed, scurry to the surface and burst. The shadow of one solid sail cast by the sun curled half round the body of the mill; starlings busied themselves among the crannies, clinging and muttering; larks were uttering their freedom in mid-air, snipe dived aloft in curves that made their feathers buzz like a grasshopper, and a cuckoo came to perch on the topmost spike of the mill, hooting contentedly until a chaffinch drove it away. By and by a man climbed over the bank and went to dip a can in the water.

‘How de!’ said Coventry, and the stranger nodded. He was an oldish man with grey whiskers and a ragged coat. He bent to fill his can.

‘I shouldn’t drink that,’ called Coventry, ‘it’s stagnant.’

The man ignored the warning and filled his can. ‘It’s running,’ he said.

‘But look!’ Coventry pointed to the water near the tunnel; it was covered with a scum of weed, feathers, and *débris* that did not move.

‘It’s running,’ repeated the man. An inch below the surface of the water a long green trail of weed, undulating like a sleepy serpent, cruised to the archway and glided through.

‘So!’ Coventry agreed. ‘It seems to be moving, yes.’

‘It’s the little draught of air coming through the tunnel as keeps the scum there. It only troubles the top of the water, the rest flows under, you see. It’s pure, pure as the air.’

After asking the time of day the old man stood his can on the parapet and sat down on the grass near them. A little way off he had lit a fire near some bushes to boil a can of tea. It appeared that he was on his way to Harwich to meet a friend who was working on a boat from Finland, and he went on talking about the Finns.

‘Queer chaps, they are. I seen ’em lots of times when I was working in the London Docks. There was a line of ships as run atween Tower Bridge and Helsingfors. I can’t just remember the name of the line, but it was something to do with the stars – that’s right! – the names of the ships was all stars, yes, they was the stars. Finnish, and they Finns are absolutely the most spotless firm under the sun. They are! Do you know what? They dunno the meaning of dirt, they dunno what it is, they never even seen a bit of dirt, and that’s the truth, Lord love us! Finnish. Spotless!’

Roley began asking him questions.

‘Are you a sailor?’

‘Not now. But I bin a sailor, son,’ he said. ‘I bin everything – ’cept rich. That I never was. But I seen the world, everything.’

‘Have you seen . . . ah . . .’ Roley paused for a suitable query: ‘. . . a whale?’

‘Ay, and ate ’em too – scatter me trimmings!’

‘What’s that?’

‘What?’



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'Scatter the trimmings?' said the puzzled boy.

'O, it's just a matter of speaking, son.'

Roley brooded for a moment: 'Have you seen a pirate?'

'Ay, and they're not much good to you.'

'I don't suppose you've seen a ghost, though,' pursued the boy.

'That's just where you makes a mistake, son. Din I tell you I seen everything?' the man eagerly replied. 'Have I not! The shepherd had gone out one night to look arter some lambs – well it warn't more than ten o'clock – and he leaves me all alone to get my supper, and so I had to go out in the backyard to fetch a pail of water. One Eastertide it was, and I was stopping with the shepherd in his cottage down Sussex way, place called Swanborough. Well, I was out in this backyard, and all in the dark, mind you, but it was starry, I heerd a kind of groan.'

The old man puckered his brow reflectively and picked a daisy.

'I heerd a kind of a groan. Looks round sharp, and sees a white figure standing agin the wall of the barn. And it was looking at me. I says: "Hullo, mate, what's up?" But the party din answer me, so I outs with my box of matches and strook a light, but when I held the match up to have a look at 'e, 'e was gone! The chap was clean gone. Well that was queer. "Where are you?" I says, but he din give me no reply. Ho – I thinks – you're up to some mischief, I'll have you out of here. So I walks over to where I'd sin him, and I just got beside the washing post with a line and

some pegs on it – the match went out in my hand! Burnt my fingers, and I dropped it! Bless my soul I dropped it! And there he was again in the dark, this white figure standing still and looking at me just like he was before, this white figure. O Lord! the old man groaned in mock fear, 'I says – "What's your game?" I says. And pretty quick I strook another match, and behold me – he were gone again!'

The ragged man gazed at Roley and then at Mr Coventry. 'He were gone,' he impressively repeated. 'Nothing there. "Come out of that" – I says. But, of course, he din give me no answer; I suppose he couldn't. No answer. I tell you, I began to feel a bit quelled, and din want that match to go out again neither. Scatter me trimmings, I *was* quelled! Then I saw something else, quite plain I did. What d'you think it was? It were a brass buckle. I saw it glitter on his stomach; you know, one of these 'ere army buckles on a soldier's belt, and I knew the buckle! I knew that buckle, it was one of the Forty-Seventh. And then the blam match went out. The match went out, and I dropped it. I dropped it. There I am in the dark again. *And* there was the white figure too and all! He was there as plain as that windmill, only he was white and foggy like. 'N every time the match went out I could see him in the dark, 'n every time I lit another match I couldn't see him at all! Some kind of soldier he was, I could see right through him all bar the buckle. Right through that military man I could *see* . . . because there was a window in the wall of the barn, and a bottle of lotion

## ‘What Can I Do?’

standing up agin it, and I could see the window right through him *and* the bottle. The bottle, too! O, dud skimbo! I tell you, I din know what to be at. I were done. “May the bird of heaven peck me” – I says – “Stop here, you, while I gets a candle. Don’t move, or I’ll cut the heart out of you!” And I darts back into the cottage. Of course, when I gets in the cottage again, when I got into that cottage, I din care a jigger about no candle. I warn’t going out in that backyard no more! I just bolts and bars that door as quick as ever I could. “Now you get on with it” – I says – and I left him to it, I warn’t going out there no more.’

The old man chuckled to himself. “That was the last I ever saw of him, and next day I hopped on off towards Salisbury, so that was the last he ever saw of me.’

Roley thought for a few moments, and then asked: ‘Did you ever see any alligators?’

‘O, alligators,’ was the contemptuous reply. ‘Must get along to my fire now.’ The tramp got up and took his can of water.

‘How are you getting to Harwich from here?’ Mr. Coventry inquired.

‘Shanks’s,’ said the old man sturdily.

‘It’s a long way, fifty miles, isn’t it?’

‘I’ve a couple of good feet on me yet,’ the old man said.

‘It’s a long walking journey for an old man,’ commented Mr. Coventry, handing him a shilling.

‘Och, I could knock a dead donkey down!’ laughed the ancient, ‘and think nothing of it! It’s all right (Thank you,

captain!), it’s all right when you’re young (Much obliged to you, sir!), when you’re young; but age does cripple you, and you get lear and windy and you thinks about death and all the gay young gals you used to know. Ha, ha, and you thinks as how you’re a fugitive from injustice, ha, ha! You do, sir, you do!’

The old man turned and hobbled away.

‘Come on, Roley,’ Mr. Coventry said. The boy got up and they trudged on again, one behind the other, Roley leading. Phew, it *was* hot! Mr. Coventry no longer sang. The paths were still grassy and sweet as before, and on either side below them the threads of shining water meandered, but all led only from one marsh to another. They were green and lush, yielding a warm breath, and the day was in its glory; but still the horizon under its cerulean dome was very far away. If ever you could reach it the Lord only knew what it amounted to – something frowsty and suburban, most likely!

‘I don’t quite know where we are,’ said the parent, a little peevishly. ‘Are you tired yet?’

‘No,’ answered Roley.

The winding dykes were very nice, but they seemed to wander and wind in a most confusing way, here, there, sometimes north, sometimes south, east a bit, west a bit, and then off south again. There was something to be said – Coventry silently mused – for a good straight road when you wanted to *get* anywhere – that is if you knew where you *wanted* to get. Of course, you couldn’t reach the horizon ever, anywhere. There was no such thing,

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though it looked all real and beautiful. It always expressed freedom, something beyond – but what did that amount to? Pretty much the same thing as the horizon! Freedom was all very well, if you could get it, but what did it amount to after all? That old tramp man, for all his independence of mind and body, travelled like a cloud wherever the wind of chance might blow him, and the doom of clouds was fixed. A man had to have a mooring somewhere, safe in some haven, and having got that he never left the harbour. And Miranda was only making a milksop of the boy. She did her best, but he was going to insist on sending Roley to a proper school now. There was one in the town, a goodish school for the sons of gentlemen, had a plate on the front gateway: High (something) Seminary, carried on by Mrs. Goodenough (widow of the late Gregory Goodenough, M.A.) and two Resident Masters. It looked a pretty old plate though.

Roley grew thirsty, but his father would not let him have a mouthful of water from the rank ditches. Some way ahead they now saw a sort of pastoral hump in the marsh with a farmhouse on it.

‘We’ll be able to get some milk at that farm,’ said Coventry. ‘Are you tired?’

‘No,’ said Roley.

As they approached the hillock they could see a proper road from it, going away to the right of them, crossing the streams for miles. There was pasture land, but no crops there. The house had two attic windows in the front roof that looked like comic eyebrows, and at each end of the roof

ridge a small pert chimney suggested ears. A tree hovered over it, a shed crouched beside it, and furze bushes skulked all round. It looked withered and forlorn. A wicket gate opened into a front garden and two huge plots of white alyssum, each as fat as a sofa, almost covered the pathway to the door. Coventry knocked on the door with his knuckles, and after a long wait two young, dark-haired, sluttish girls, as alike as twins, came. They gazed with cowlike eyes when he asked for some milk, stood close against each other and would not answer him even when he repeated his request.

‘Are you dumb?’ he asked. ‘You’re not dumb, are you?’

The girls looked at each other and giggled.

‘Is there no one at home?’ he continued.

Again they giggled.

‘Come, no nonsense now,’ he said impatiently. ‘My little boy is very thirsty. Some milk, or some water, please. I’ll see if I can find sixpence for you.’

They would not answer, they turned to each other and half hid their faces.

‘Where’s your mother – or haven’t you got any mother? Don’t you go to school? Please oblige me, this little boy is very thirsty, and we’ve a long way to go. What is your name? No? Dumb? Silly? Good God, what is the matter with you? Where’s the well, where do you keep your water?’

And so on, and so on. But not a word could he get from the two frivolous children. They wriggled and writhed and gaped and giggled in the porch as though Coventry were a kind

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of comical monster. Then they suddenly slammed the door on him, and he was entirely baffled.

‘Well . . . may I . . . O, blast it! Come on, Roley, we’ll have to get along home.’ And he led the way out to that long, straight roadway across the marsh. It was the road home, but it might as well have been a path across equatorial Africa; forthright, hot and sandy, with no beginning, no end, only an undeviating integrity that seemed inhuman. They plodded side by side and said not a word to each other. The boy was apparently unaffected, but the father was dull, dumb, and weary, and being so he knew he would rather be at home devouring a tea of fried sausages and eggs. Beauty and goodness and freedom were disillusioning bores. Like charity, everything began at home. The mood of the journey so wrought upon him that even when at last they reached the fringe of the town and home was almost in sight he thought that the almond blossom in the villas had turned rusty, and the rich young leaves of the trees were flapping in gestures of woe.

At the shop of Martha Ruffell, Roley consumed quantities of ginger beer and dough cake that had been steeped in sugary fat. Coventry refused to partake of these delicacies.

‘What *will* your mother say?’ he gloomily asked. ‘And your birthday to-morrow! Lord, what a giant you are, what a giant!’

‘Can take her some of this cake,’ said Roley brightly.

Coventry thought it inadvisable, and so they arrived home with empty hands. And, as it happened, Roley’s

enthusiasm made Miranda as merry as a lark; she joyfully gave them sausages and eggs for tea, and listened with glee to her son’s narration of the wonders he had seen, a frog, some dogs, a dead duck, and a man had seen some alligators and ate a whale! And as Coventry listened his weariness fled away and he recalled with animation the events of the walk and his despondent musings. He could smile now, for the evening world outside was bathed in translucent clarity and the old myths of beauty and freedom fanned him once more with their mysterious wings.

‘George,’ cried Miranda, ‘he wants to see the little house. Don’t you, Roley?’

Actually Roley did not display any eagerness, but Miranda’s enthusiasm was elastic, and so they all went into the workroom where Coventry revealed the latest form of his contrivance. He had fitted it out with many little objects that resembled their own furnishings. Miranda was ecstatic. Chairs, tables, piano, father’s and mother’s bed, Roley’s bed, pictures on the walls – all were there. There was electric light and a little dribble of water really ran into the bath when you poked something with a lead pencil. But, somehow, it all looked silly and futile to Coventry himself.

‘Dad’s made it for your birthday,’ said the excited Miranda. ‘What do you think of that?’ And Coventry added: ‘Anyone could live in it now, if they wanted to.’

‘No,’ said Roley with a solemn stare at his father.

‘Why not?’ Miranda asked.

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'Can't get in,' Roley explained.

'O,' she rallied him briskly, 'you only have to pretend you're a tiny little man.'

'I couldn't get out again,' Roley persisted.

'And just think! You're seven years old to-morrow, and soon you'll be able to make a big one just like it

for yourself. Dad made it for your birthday; didn't you, George?'

Roley still stared dubiously at his father's toy.

'Have it if you like,' conceded Coventry, 'I've no use for it. But,' he glanced sadly at his son, 'I don't think it's any good to you either, is it?'

'No,' said the little boy.

# Soviet Drama

by David Magarshack

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SOVIET drama is only sixteen years old. In that very short time over 5,000 plays by new Soviet playwrights have been performed in the theatres of the socialist workers' republic. It is characteristic of the 'new' proletarian drama that out of this holocaust of plays hardly ten still survive in the repertory of the Russian theatre. Most of them are dead and forgotten and, what is more significant, there are no mourners to lament their demise.

The most striking feature of Soviet drama is the enthusiasm of its creators for the new forms of social life, the 'new reality,' the 'new man,' which the classless society, when it comes, will produce. From Vladimir Mayakovski to Nikolai Pogodin, the first and the last important playwrights of the new Russia, prophecies in dramatic forms abound about 'the promised land' of communism. These prophecies, apart from being extremely vague, give so bleak a picture of a rationalized, humourless, ant-like society that Soviet dramatic critics are mainly preoccupied with dispelling the effects they might have on the playgoer. It is, indeed, the preoccupation with the transformation of the 'capitalist' man into his 'marxist' equivalent that is chiefly responsible for the fact that, generally

speaking, Soviet drama is so dry, so featureless, so humourless. 'For the last two years,' a Soviet dramatic critic writes, 'the demand has become more and more vocal in the Press and at conferences: "Let the theatre give us laughter!"' But the first to make that demand was the playgoer. He laughed when the playwright wished to preserve the "high seriousness" of the situation!

It is the audience, therefore, that in Russia, as elsewhere, is the enemy of the prig, of the reformer rattling the dry bones of theory under the impression that he is breathing new life into a moribund world. It is the class-conscious prig who more than anyone else is responsible for the fact that, in the words of one of the younger Russian playwrights, 'our plays have such narrow horizons, so little vitality in the problems they discuss, so little truth in the facts they observe. 'We are lazy,' B. S. Romashov goes on, 'and have no curiosity. For knowledge of life we all too often substitute literary reminiscences, for the study of reality - newspaper cuttings. We get our knowledge of the living man from chance conversations in trams and restaurants.'

Another striking feature of Soviet drama is its 'giant-mania.' The Russian playwright seems to be interested only

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in world-shaking events, in epic and eternal problems. He is obsessed by the newspaper jargon which hails the construction of every new factory as of world importance and, what is even worse, he is incapable of discerning the human voice above the roar of machinery. 'Take any play,' a critic complains, 'cover up the names of the characters, and it is impossible to say who is speaking. You can transfer chunks of dialogue from one play to another without anyone being the wiser for it.' 'Our drama,' another critic declares, 'has not yet learnt to create character. It is afraid of portraying emotion or temperament. We have very few plays which, in addition to giving food for thought, also give food for the heart and the imagination.'

These main features of Soviet drama are already discernible in the early Soviet plays, the plays which were written in the days of revolutionary struggles, when, in accordance with the decision of the Government, the theatre, together with the cinema and the concert hall, was to be devoted entirely to communist propaganda. The bare ideal was further elaborated in a decision taken by the XII Congress of the Communist Party which laid it down that 'it is necessary to make use of the theatre for a systematic mass propaganda of the idea of the struggle for communism. For that reason it is necessary to organize the artistic forces of the country with a view to the selection and the creation of a revolutionary repertory which should, in the first place, present the heroic moments of the struggle of the proletariat.'

Vladimir Mayakovsky provided the Soviet theatre of that day with spec-

tacular drama in which communist propaganda was the chief concern of the play. Mayakovsky's slogan was: 'The theatre is the servant of communist propaganda.' 'The task of my dramatic work,' he declared, 'is to bring back the spectacular to the theatre and to transform the stage into a political platform.' His most celebrated play, the *Mysteries-Bouff*, is a satirical lampoon on the capitalist world, allegorically represented sometimes by seven pairs of clean spirits, at other times by paradise and hell, and, in the play's last edition, by the kingdom of ruin, which inevitably succumbs to the invincible might of the international proletariat, the seven unclean (sic!) spirits.

Mayakovsky's other plays – *The Bug*, a lampoon on the bourgeois that still lurks in the breast of even the truest proletarian, *The Bath*, a lampoon on Soviet bureaucracy, and his historical play *Moscow Is On Fire*, which treats of the 1905 revolution – are all propaganda pieces in which the bitter pill of the moralist is sugared by fantastic displays, satire and all sorts of fireworks, and in which the dearth of creative ability is camouflaged by grotesque buffoonery, circus tricks and poster publicity. Mayakovsky was an irreconcilable enemy of the individualist as opposed to the collective will of the new-born proletarian culture; but, at bottom, he was one of the greatest individualists thrown up by the revolution. His hatred of the classical drama was the hatred of a man who would rather destroy a work of art that he knows he could not create than contemplate its existence beside his own inferior product. He was against

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Meyerhold, his friend and collaborator, when the latter embarked on his career of re-interpreting the classics; but, faced with Meyerhold's determination, he took consolation in the fact that Meyerhold had produced the Government Inspector in such a way that 'it would make Gogol turn over ten times in his grave.'

The drama of pure propaganda was created and existed in a period of revolutionary upheaval and civil war, when both the audience and the critics forgave the playwright his serious shortcomings in regard to the artistic qualities of his play and tolerated his crudities of characterization so long as the subject of the play was of momentary significance and excited their revolutionary ardour. 'It was,' in the estimate of a present-day Russian dramatic critic, 'a very feeble drama. The plays of that period were very often very primitive and naive, the characterization – non-existent, the plot – mechanical.'

The propaganda play was succeeded in 1924 by the historical romantic play representing the 'heroic moments' of the revolutionary struggle. Bill Byelocherkovski's *The Storm* was the first play of this type, and Vsevolod Vishnevski is its most talented exponent. These chronicle plays are very similar, not only in plot, but also in the large number of characters for which they are famous. The chief hero is usually a sailor, 'the pride of the revolution,' and one of the most recurrent characters is the 'bratishka,' the young lad who, rifle in hand, overcomes the greatest obstacles in the way of the victorious proletariat. The characterization in these plays is very crude and unreal.

'Commissar Koshkin,' a Russian critic writes about the chief character of *Lyubov Yarovaya* by Trenev, one of the more successful plays of this type, 'is, to be sure, one of us, but somehow one feels that he wears, instead of a holster with a revolver, a sabre, and instead of a sailor's tunic – a cloak!'

It was as a reaction to these extremely unreal characters and situations that the call for the 'living man' in Russian drama was raised. But in his anxiety to portray the living man the Russian playwright was faced with the dilemma that the individual communist leader was so far below the ideal 'new man' of communist ethics that to portray him as he actually is instead of as he ought to be was something very near to a betrayal of the revolution. There were, luckily, the problems of the first five-years plan to be given a dramatic expression. Propaganda had shifted its ground. Instead of fighting an external foe, it now became necessary to fight the internal wrecker and kulak. The battlefield was now the factory and the collective farm. Plays no longer exposed the dark machinations of the 'white' army officer, but the different and numerous enemies of communist internal politics. The Russian playwright, frightened by the 'living man,' turned for a subject to the various social problems of the day.

It was again the newspapers and not life that supplied the playwright with plots. Although, therefore, the plays, written during the period of what is generally referred to as 'socialist construction,' showed more variety both in treatment and in dramatic personæ, the cardinal faults of the romantic chronicle drama remained.



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The characters were still puppets, which differed from each other only in so far as the villain was this time more life-like than the hero, his conception by the playwright being less restrained by the idealized mechanics of the theoretical 'socialist' or 'new' man.

In *The Shot*, Bezymenski's poetic drama devoted to the young shock-brigaders, those crusaders of communism who help to increase the production in Soviet factories, the members of the 'comsomol,' the Communist Union of Youth, are entirely colourless. 'They are all,' a Soviet critic complains, 'ideal shock-brigaders who have long ago, possibly in the womb of their mothers, rid themselves of all the bourgeois elements of their mentality, such as individualism, envy, conceit, egoism, etc. About any one of them it could be said:

He led us all, was friends with all,  
He never betrayed the comsomol,  
Courageous, truthful and simple  
withal . . .

The characters of this play,' the critic sums up, 'are not living people, but talking ideas, walking shadows . . .'

'Walking shadows' is perhaps an unfair description of *all* the plays of this character. Young playwrights like Kirshon, Afinogenov, Katayev, Romashov and others, have attempted to give a deeper psychological insight in their characters, but even their plays consist chiefly of discussions on moral and social themes. The subject of 'love' and the 'eternal triangle' is perhaps one of the most illuminating examples to illustrate the way in which Soviet drama treats such themes.

'In general,' a Soviet critic observes, 'when discussing the peculiar position of love in our plays, we cannot but confess that it is very deplorable. What an indifferent, "vegetarian" sort of love it is!' And, indeed, when one turns to one of the more talented Soviet playwrights, U. K. Olyosha, and examines what he has to say on the subject of love in his much lauded play *The Conspiracy of Passions*, one cannot but agree with the above criticism. In his play, Olyosha presents the conflict between the bourgeois passions, such as love, hatred, jealousy, pride, envy and pity, and the communist conceptions of moral values. The bourgeois world of passions is personified by Ivan Babichev, and the communist code of morals by his brother - Andrey. 'Passions,' declares Andrey, 'are done with. In the future there will be only mating!' Andrey's chief preoccupation is the invention of a new sausage, a sausage more palatable than any yet produced in the land of the Soviets. So preoccupied is he with his sausage that when Valya declares her love to him, he pays no attention to her, although he is quite willing to marry her. His rival Kovalerov is so much under the influence of Ivan that he calls Andrey 'seducer,' but even that term, taken from decadent capitalist melodrama, fails to make any impression on Andrey, so entirely indifferent is he to the capitalist moral code. Valya, on the other hand, has not reached that high standard of communist indifference to capitalist morality, and she slaps Kovalerov's face. Next time they meet, the following dialogue takes place between them:

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VALYA. Good-morning Kovalerov!

KOVALEROV. (*Sulking.*) How d'you do . . .

VALYA. What's the matter with you? You are not angry with me for having slapped your face, are you?

KOVALEROV. I am not angry. Valya, are you going to marry Andrey?

VALYA. Not yet.

KOVALEROV. I'm going to cut his throat with a razor, if you do!

VALYA. You will, will you? Very well, cut his throat! Andrey!

KOVALEROV. Valya!

VALYA. Andrey, Kovalerov wants to cut your throat!

ANDREY. *My* throat? Very well. What do you want me to do? Lie down? Take off my collar?

SHAPIRO. Good Lord, here's Shakespeare for you!

ANDREY. What are you going to cut my throat with?

VALYA. With a razor!

ANDREY. By all means. Let's cut, Kovalerov! (*Forces the razor from KOVALEROV and cuts the sausage.*) So! Can you smell the aroma?

And if any doubt should be entertained about the seriousness of the above dialogue, here is an excerpt from another place in the same play, showing the villain Ivan at work, disseminating capitalist propaganda. The scene takes place on the stairs of a tenement house. It is night.

A MAN'S VOICE. (*From within.*) Leeza!

LISABETA IVANOVNA. (*To her lover.*) Coward!

YOUNG MAN. Wait . . . I'm not a coward. But if I am to cut his throat I shall be put in prison for eight years,

and then what? You will go and live with someone else . . .

THE VOICE. Leeza!

YOUNG MAN. Well, do you really want me to? Listen, in another minute you will go to him and I shall be dead. I'll cut my own throat. Would you let me do that?

LISABETA IVANOVA. All this is talk. (*Shouts*) Coming! (*Disappears behind the door.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*Sits down on stairs in a state of collapse.*) What shall I do? What shall I do?

IVAN. (*From above.*) You must kill the husband!

THE YOUNG MAN. (*Jumps to his feet.*) What? What is it?

IVAN. In my view you ought to kill the husband!

YOUNG MAN. What's that got to do with you?

IVAN. Don't be angry, my friend. Yes. All day and all night I wander about. I peep through windows. I listen to the talk of strangers. (*Pause.*) What are you waiting for, young man? The woman you love is now being kissed by another. Listen . . . How quiet it is behind that door. They are kissing . . .

The play, like many another such play, ends with the victory of the 'new' man, Andrey, over the old order, personified by Ivan, who is killed by Kovalerov.

And here is the problem of the triangle treated by another well-known Soviet playwright, Fyko. The play is *Cherries in Snow*. The theme – love and jealousy among communists. The scene is the last scene of the play.

ZEENA. (*The wronged wife.*) Every day I am thinking of you, Vikenty, and

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if you are happy, I shall be glad for your sake . . .

VIKENTY. (*The model communist who is leaving ZEENA for another.*) I am happy, too, darling Zeena. We are friends. Yes. Everything really is quiet, simple, plain. We are, I think, simple, but good people. Life goes on. Here's snow, there's the garden. Behind the garden is the big city. We are working miracles. We are building a new world. That's that. . . .'

(CURTAIN.)

And that's that! To appreciate fully this final curtain, however, the following view on the rôle of tragedy in Soviet drama must be quoted. It is by comrade O. Litovski, and is taken from a recently published volume of critical essays on the Soviet drama.

'There is a distinct prejudice against tragedy among Soviet playwrights,' Litovski writes. 'It is thought that tragedy is impossible under the communist régime. This is not true. Among us, of course, a tragedy of individual conflicts and passions is unthinkable, in the same way as a tragedy which negatives life is unthinkable with us. In our life tragedy must be painted in special optimistic colours, but it exists and is entitled to exist. Is not the life of the German working-class at present tragic? But such a tragedy does not leave one helpless. On the contrary, it mobilizes all one's strength!'

If that is informed critical opinion, what can one expect of the poor Soviet playwright? Is he to look for guidance to the bourgeois drama, 'whose creative methods,' according to another Soviet dramatic critic, 'are children's boots for us giants'?

But if the attempt to create 'the hero of our time who should serve as an example to the younger generation' has so far resulted only in a gallery of 'Bolshevik angels in everything but wings,' to take the more charitable view of a Russian dramatic critic of these spineless automata of the communist theatre, the 'living man' came on the Russian stage through a back door, the back door of the 'documentary drama' of Nikolai Pogodin.

Before he began writing for the stage, Pogodin was a journalist, and his first plays are really sketches in dialogue which he composed on the spot. His first play, *Tempo* (the Russian word for record-breaking in factories, the word 'record' having too capitalist a sound to be used in the description of so sacred a task as the increase in production), was written round the Stalingrad tractor factory, and his most successful play, *My Friend*, round the Gorkovski motor-car factory. 'This play,' Pogodin writes in his preface to *Tempo*, 'has not been invented by me. It is true to life. It is a truthful account of the Stalingrad tractor factory. The American engineer Carter is Mr. Kiddler, who built our Stalingrad factory. The other characters are all living men. The theatre,' he goes on in characteristic fashion to generalize about the function of an art about which, at that time, at any rate, he knew very little, 'should deal in documentary drama, and it would be a good plan to try to bring to the spectator this truthfulness, this documentary evidence.'

*Tempo* deals with the marvellous records achieved by the Stalingrad factory, and it is remarkable not for the

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records themselves, which, much as Pogodin may have wished to invent nothing, are pure inventions, but for the fact that for the first time in Soviet drama the workers express very unflattering opinions about communist commissars. The first scene or episode, since Pogodin, being too lazy to master the craft of playwriting, prefers the anarchic methods of unco-ordinated episodes to the more classical forms of drama (this, too, becomes a virtue of the 'new' drama inherited from Mayakovski), deals with a lynching incident: the workers of the factory refuse to deliver up one of their comrades who is ill with typhoid fever and proceed to lynch the woman doctor, Valka, who insists on taking him away to the hospital. They warn her first, however:

'Don't trouble the people, girl . . . There's enough trouble without you . . . Look at her, the she-commissar in the leather jacket . . .' And so on.

'The she-commissar in the leather jacket . . .' Such a reference to a commissar and to the leather jacket usually worn by the communist hierarchy was unheard of before Pogodin, and although the criticism implied in the description is slight, it is characteristic of the Russian drama before Pogodin that no playwright would ever have dreamt of applying it even in such a context.

This realistic streak appears more sharply in Pogodin's second play, *The Song of the Axe*, which deals with the magical, almost mystical power of the worker Stepan of the Zlatoust steel works, who invents a marvellous alloy of stainless steel which surpasses any other stainless steel in the world.

Stepan achieves it all over a pint of beer, just by sheer inherited 'elemental' force. When the precious piece of stainless steel is stolen, Stepan is unable to repeat his feat. The engineer Kvasha upbraids him:

KVASHA. Well, well . . . So these are our inventive geniuses. Don't you even know how you made that steel, you blockhead? Don't you realize that your invention is worth millions? You have invented a metal that is in every way better than gold. Can't you remember how you came to do it?

STEPAN. What's the use of swearing, comrade Kvasha? What are you complaining about? It is true, I did get that piece of metal. What of it? My father, who sang psalms in church, could also make fine steel. We shall get our metal all right. We shan't have to go to America for it!

And Stepan is right. The miracle happens again.

It will be seen that Pogodin, for all his documentary evidence, is as afraid of reality as his fellow playwrights. But if he indulges in daydreams and if he shares the mystical faith in the superiority of Russian home-grown geniuses like Stepan over the scientist of the West, he has at least an eye for character, as the following scene from *The Song of the Axe* shows:

ANKA. (*Addresses the village women whom she has recruited for work in the factory, and describes to them 'how we work in the Russian fashion.'*) The siren sounds, but no one is in any hurry to start work. No silence, mind you. Quite the contrary. I know it too well. (*She puts her hands to her mouth and shouts, imitating a man's voice.*) 'Gabriel!' (*She*

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*answers herself.*) 'Eh?' 'Gabriel! How's the missus, Matrena Kharitonovna? Has she had her baby yet?' 'Eh? Can't hear!' 'Has she had her baby? Yes? Thanks. Gabriel, you so-and-so, will you stand me half a pint to celebrate the happy event? When? To-day? Thanks!' Now at last he starts work. Ah, for a glass of the right stuff! Ah-h . . . (*She stretches herself and smacks her lips.*) He starts the motor . . . (*Shows how, after starting the motor, the worker lights a cigarette and inhales the smoke with deep satisfaction.*) Does he look at what he is doing? Not on your life! I know. He does look somewhere, but the devil alone knows where. Meanwhile the motor goes round and round and raises a terrific din. 'Pardon me, comrade, but where is your metal?' He hasn't got it, the son of a bitch. (*Shouts*) 'Foreman Sidor Ivanovitch, where's the metal?' The foreman replies: 'To hell with you . . .' And a discussion starts. Very well. Now he's ready at last. He is at work. (*Dumb show*) And his face is just like a pancake, and his eyes are without expression like a pig's eyes and his behind gets bigger and bigger . . . from too much gossiping. This is how the Russian works, my dears, without any Ford nonsense, in the true Russian fashion . . . On my word of honour!

It is characteristic of Pogodin that he is quite incapable of drawing the moral from his acute perception of reality. In spite of the fact that the Russian worker, unlike the American, takes his factory duties in so leisurely a fashion, he achieves miracles and far out-distances America.

It is his realism, however, that

makes Pogodin so great a force on the modern Russian stage. In his third play, *My Friend*, Pogodin paints a realistic picture of a Russian 'Ford.' Guy, the managing director of a Russian motor-car factory, is no longer a walking shadow endowed with all the virtues of a communist hero. On the contrary, he has every vice that the Soviet stage has hitherto kept for the capitalist villain: he drinks, he lies, he demands that his wife should bear him children, he flirts with his secretary.

GUY. According to my calculations, I should soon have a son. Well, and if not a son, then a daughter. May? Yes. May will do very well. A girl will take a long time to grow up, though . . . Boys grow much quicker . . .

His wife Ella, however, being an old-fashioned communist who has no other interest except the 'party,' disappoints Guy's expectations of an heir by undergoing an abortion. Guy is furious. 'You are not a woman at all!' he shouts.

ELLA. You're fed up when your wife refuses to be your plaything. (*Imitates him.*) Wife, wife, wife . . . He wants his wife to entertain him . . . Disgraceful!

GUY. To hell with a wife who won't entertain one! From such wives it is best to run as from epidemics. . . . And he goes on to taunt her by promising to call her in future, not 'wife,' but 'a communist's mate.'

'Five or ten years ago,' a Russian dramatic critic comments on this scene, 'Ella would have been the heroine of the play, to-day she's its comic relief!' And he hastens to explain this truly

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revolutionary change in the communist outlook on women in this characteristic fashion: 'Since Dneprostroy was built, the whole human psychology has undergone a cardinal change. Guy may now call Ella wife without regarding her as a plaything, a communist may have a child without by that act becoming a bourgeois!'

But Guy's psychology seems to have undergone an even more radical change so far as his domestic virtues are concerned than can be explained by the construction of the Dneprostroy. He becomes, in fact, indistinguishable from the common or garden tired business man.

GUY. (*To his secretary, KSENIA IVANOVNA.*) Let's go to the movies, or the woods or on the river. I want to gaze at the stars, to hold a woman's hand, to be silent. Why do you look at me as if I have got the plague? Guy is a responsible worker. Guy is not allowed to visit Ksenia Ivanovna in order to flirt with her Guy, you are a communist, therefore you must sit in your car and kiss the portraits of your leaders! Let's go, Ksenia! Let's have a walk in the dusk. Even after such a tiring day I feel alive. I am alive, my friends, I am alive!

Pogodin, of course, addresses here not so much his audience, as his fellow dramatists. Here, indeed, is a living man with a vengeance! It is now Mayakovski's turn to turn over ten times in his grave as he wished Gogol to do after Meyerhold had had a go at the Government Inspector. Here is a portrait, generally acknowledged to be life-like, of a communist captain of industry, one of the 'heroes of our time,' and, lo and behold, he is alive and

proud of it. 'I am alive, my friends, I am alive!'

Pogodin is a communist. Before the final curtain, his friend Guy turns to the audience and exclaims: 'Well, what *do* you want? You know perfectly well what you want. You want to create a marvellous society: a classless society!' But he is free from the cant of the communist propagandist, who at bottom is so obsessed by his middle-class inhibitions that he cannot imagine his 'promised land' except as a world for whose sake, in the words of one of Pogodin's fellow playwrights, 'it is right that one should deny oneself one's feelings and thoughts, everything, in fact, that helps to form an independent and many-sided personality. One has to arm oneself with an iron logic, one has to clothe oneself in iron decisions and analytic reasoning, one must forswear all romantic impulses and desires. This, one has to do, not only because history demands it, but also because my reason tells me that this is the only road along which humanity will find happiness!' Or, to quote another well-known playwright of modern Russia: 'In the society where there will be neither rich nor poor, it will be possible to estimate the absolute value of each man. In the classless society much will be done for the betterment of human nature. Here real competition will start: which of us is better, purer, cleverer, more inventive? Absolute values. No millions. No inheritance. It is possible that this true competition between human qualities will be the chief subject of the drama of the future.'

But what will a man like Guy do in this static world of good resolutions?

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Why, he will be turned to a shadow of his own self, indistinguishable from the other shadows of the Russian stage! Is it any wonder that the Russian audiences, tired of gazing on shadows, should acclaim Pogodin's *My Friend* as the best play of the Soviet stage? Can a scene like the following between the Russian 'Fords,' who are waiting to be received by a high official, be resisted?

THE THIRD. (*The oil king.*) Stepan, can't you get me ten lorries? No matter if they have no tyres! I shall get the tyres elsewhere. I shall pay you in cash, on my word of honour!

THE FIRST. Do you hear, comrades? He's trying to buy lorries without tyres from me. Cash down, if you please! No, Ivan Gavrilovitch, I shall refuse you the lorries as a matter of principle. Do you remember our last conference in Moscow? I implored you like the holy virgin: 'Vanya Gavrilovitch, my dearest friend, my darling, don't come forward with any demands for money to-day. You're an old captain of industry. They'll give you the money. But I am one of the young captains, and, if you grab all the money, I shan't get a penny.' But no. You insisted on your demand, and I got nothing . . .

THE FIRST. (*Suddenly.*) But where's the oil king? Has he gone in? . . . (*To the fourth.*) You are quite right, comrade, he's gone in before his turn in the queue . . . Ugh . . .

The oil king reappears crestfallen, having got no money this time, and it is Guy's turn to try his luck.

GUY. (*At the door.*) Oh, well, I don't expect I shall get anything, either. Vassya, wish me luck.

THE FOURTH. Nor do I expect I shall. But I can't go back. I must try.

THE FIFTH. (*With great emotion.*) Let's go back, my friend. At home we have power and the people there are more amenable. In one place you will manage to steal half a waggon, in another you will succeed in begging one, and in a third you will just take one without asking!

Guy, at the interview with the high official, is refused the 350,000 gold roubles which he wants for the purchase of lathes for his factory, having got the wrong type of lathes from abroad.

THE HIGH OFFICIAL. I have no money. You all come here like lords of creation. You forget that you are wasting public money. You don't care a hang for the State plans. To you the State is a gold mine. We shall have to put on trial the gentlemen who regard the State as a gold mine!

Guy is back in the ante-room and is thus greeted by his colleagues:

THE SECOND. Quiet, comrades. Here's Guy. Well, Grisha, have they hauled you over the coals?

THE FOURTH. Ah, you look thin, mate. Dark rings under the eyes. Have you taken your punishment like a good lad?

GUY. It wasn't so bad, but I have had quite enough of it. They kicked me out all right, though.

THE FIRST. Quiet, comrades. . . . Here's the oil well again. All hail to the oil king!

THE THIRD. You may well joke, Soviet Ford. We know the kind of Ford you are. Well, Stepan, have you changed your mind about the lorries?

## Soviet Drama

I am telling you I am ready to take them without tyres . . .

In spite of this 'strong breeze of healthy realism,' a realism, by the way, which helps to explain more than any number of articles the difficulties of the young Russian industry, Pogodin seems quite incapable of facing reality. For all his insistence on documentary facts, he is really afraid of facts. This characteristic he shares with the rest of the Russian playwrights, and, be it said, dramatic critics. It is the penalty Russian art is paying to marxist dogma driven to its enervating extreme by men blinded by class hatred. It would be of little use to point out that the episode with the Russian 'Fords,' far from being, as a Russian dramatic critic observed, 'only possible in a Soviet play,' is so significant because it reveals the soul of every Ford, whether in communist Russia or in the capitalist West. In Russia, it is true, the Fords no longer work for their own enrichment, but even in the capitalist world riches are only important to the true captain of industry because they supply him with the only means of obtaining power. 'You all come here,' the high official tells Guy, 'like lords of creation!'

Pogodin's unwillingness or incapacity to face facts becomes painfully evident as the plot of *My Friend* develops. Guy, baulked of his attempt to get the necessary funds for the purchase of the lathes from abroad, tries all sorts of subterfuges, which morally are in no way less reprehensible than all the dishonest tricks of a Kreuger. It is not for nothing that in the first episode of the play he remarks to the American millionaire: 'I shall have to make a note of your methods. I shall

put them before my Government.' When nothing avails, however, he summons his executive staff and, after a night's conference, the plans for transforming the useless lathes are miraculously drawn up. 'We have spent the whole night with the managing director inventing things,' a member of the staff remarks to another. 'Congratulate us. We've done it. The lathes have been adapted, comrade Belkovski. We shall manage without gold!'

Then why all that unnecessary hullabaloo? Why waste the people's money in rushing to Moscow to interview high officials, why all this lying, all this thieving, all this deceit? Pogodin does not seem to be bothered by such questions. On the contrary, having achieved by a miracle in one night what it would have taken the highly trained engineers of the West months of painstaking work, he goes on merrily with his plot. Guy still wants his 350,000 gold roubles. He goes to see the high official again, but does not tell him that he has adapted the lathes. He still pretends to want the money for the same purpose and, in the end, he gets it!

THE HIGH OFFICIAL. What a terrible fellow you are, Guy! Can't you think of something?

GUY. Can't think of anything . . .

THE HIGH OFFICIAL. You are a thief, Guy!

GUY. On my word of honour . . .

And lest the innocent spectator should imagine that this incident is merely an isolated episode which cannot be interpreted as Guy's system of running an industry, Pogodin, with true psychological insight, undeceives him. In the second episode of the



## David Magarshack

second act Guy is discovered reading telegrams, and his asides are quite characteristic of the man.

GUY. (*Reads.*) 'For the third time we demand the payment of 500,000 roubles for the railway lines.' Go on demanding! 'Leningrad refuses to supply any more drills. Lapshin.' The damn fool! I shall have to write and tell him how to steal drills from Leningrad!

It is true that the Soviet dramatic critic is not quite happy about Guy's character. Pogodin's quite fatuous appeal to his audience, 'You know perfectly well what you want. You want to create a marvellous society, a classless society!' rouses highly disquietening doubts as to whether his hero will quite fit in into that society. Guy, the critic comes to the melancholy conclusion, is not really *My Friend*, but *My Enemy*. But he does not deny that Guy is a true portrait of a communist captain of industry. The only consolation that he and his fellow critics can draw from this 'living' exponent of communist industrial methods is that Guy is not yet the 'new' man of the classless society. Marx, of course, is quoted: 'Philosophers,' Marx wrote, 'merely explain the world in one way or another, but the important thing is to change it.' The conclusion from this somewhat moth-eaten saying of the prophet is that 'our art, and especially its militant advance guard, the drama,

must be inspired by this philosophy of the true transformation of the world, and not merely by the desire to interpret and mirror it in a passive way.' How much playwrights in Russia are affected by such a doctrine can be judged from the fact that Pogodin's last play, *Snow*, is a piece of tedious moralizing, in which both the heroes and the villains, in accordance with the worst traditions of Soviet drama, are just talking shadows, and in which Pogodin's entire lack of the critical faculty betrays itself in the wholesale conversion of the counter-revolutionaries who, in the twinkling of an eye, become 'Bolshevik angels,' wings and all. . . .

Will the shortsighted 'marxist' theologians succeed in strangling the new Russian drama or will the Russian audiences with their true love of the theatre and the classical drama demand more Guys on the Russian stage? \* There can be no doubt that Guy is the first swallow of the coming spring of Russian drama. It may take the Soviet playwright a long time to discover that the 'new' man is really old Adam, but not till he makes that shattering discovery can Russia be expected to give the world again great plays about living people.

\* 'Our public,' a Russian dramatic critic observes, 'merely go to see the plays of our Soviet dramatists because they are looking for something to while away an idle hour, whereas they flock to the classical plays because they are anxious to be amused and instructed'

# Miss de Falla's Mail

by John Pudney

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AT the garden gate she felt tired suddenly. The situation magnified, she regarded every action under a glass; and yet each action was so casual – the packing of a small bag and thinking that it would be the seven-twenty, leave here at seven and take the short cut. Yes, so casual that it was difficult to see at what moment the decision came; and she was astonished to find herself looking back through the laburnum tree at her home, detached already as if she had walked away from it years ago. Many girls would have laughed, cried, or at least made pretence at a sneer, but Anne, with the heavy bag, felt tired, worried to catch the seven-twenty, and calm enough to regard the inevitability of her slow, weary progress.

Then as she went through into the road she smiled to herself because she was going away from home to her lover John.

I sat at home in the lilac cool of three June evenings since Sunday when he went back. I have been unable to sleep because of my darling John, my lover. I thought of him always standing about in my room, as touching this and that, as talking about painting or America or the affairs in Germany. His voice is like a scythe, seething through long grass, leaving

the sweet chopped beginnings for my coming and going. My ways change, the vistas alter. I do not desire closeness nor safety except the closeness of our being together and the safety of his strength, his swing of a scythe through darkness. I have been awake for three close hopeless nights and now I am going to leave home and follow him. That, I think, is what he desires, what he expected.

She went up the road, past the silence of the ripening cherry orchards and over the canal bridge. Down on the towpath she saw the village boys on the hump of the next bridge undressing in the sunset, their nakedness shining in the distance. Their stridency always caused her to shrink when she came that way, the wet shaking and splashing, the yells and the factory backchat.

As soon as she was close they were silent. Many of them knew her. 'Look out, here's Miss Garth. Look out, Pete, get your bags on.' They smelt of the canal water; she glanced down and saw it deep under the bridge where they dived. As she struggled by with her bag she prickled with resentment at the hush, at the clatter which her own hurrying feet made on the loose gravel. It was not respect either for her as a woman or as an individual, it was a grudging fear of

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her difference. She heard a scuffling, and giggles from where the boy Pete was cowering naked; somebody waved Pete's trousers from the bridge above and she felt that the joke was on her. A pity they don't take their good bodies into the sun and keep their pride; a pity they don't understand.

Yet a girl of twenty-five who did understand, a fine intelligent girl who knew better, was blushing as she went by. Anne Garth, going to her lover, taking her freedom, was ashamed to be blushing. Nakedness was upstart, it would assert itself slowly. She was sure she believed in it, but she did not know why.

She thought hotly of the boy John, alone, waiting for her, like a coiled spring ready to be unloosed. She wanted his energy, his fidelity, not like a dog, but positive toward her, polarized. So she was leaving home and going to him: he expected that.

She thought this for so long that it burnt itself inside her like a religion. And when she came to the station she asked for her ticket in a quiet magic voice. Then she stood alone on the platform; she was the only passenger for London. Who would want to travel up on the seven-twenty on an evening like this? At home they would soon find the note she had left.

His rooms were in Soho. She remembered the turning off Regent Street where the houses stood so close as trees in a dark forest. His top-floor rooms craned toward the sky but never reached above the other houses. They were very small rooms, up three flights of stairs. But she had not noticed their restraint as he had. She had not questioned their dimensions

because of her happiness, the few hours she had been there.

Anne, Anne, what are you doing, wiping your dusty country shoes with your handkerchief, sitting alone in the carriage humming a Schumann song so astonishingly incorrectly? You are in a hurry, but this train will not move any faster. You are putting stuff on your face, too much stuff, and your little broth of freckles is most desirable. You have put on your fine stylish hat without brushing your hair. Anne, you are very decisive this evening. It would be difficult for anyone to resist your will. Let us think of you always, decking yourself in your incomparably well-favoured hat, spreading the fingers of your brown responsible hands.

His rooms were in Soho. The streets were quiet, exhaling the dust and sweat of the day. The sky was drawn fine as brass, reflecting the London light, throwing back the echo. In the back streets you could hear the eating and talking, the sighing and crying of the people who lived at the top of the old houses. In front of shut warehouses and office buildings the pavements ached with the heat.

She looked for a light in his room, and sniffed the few sprigs of syringa from home. Their warm pungency excited her, urged her on. She rang his bell.

He isn't in. He isn't there. I am *not* going to cry. I must not cry here in the street. He will come back and find me and laugh 'country bumpkin.' I expected him to be in, I suppose that was ridiculous. Where are you, John? I have come to you, John, and I am afraid of being alone in this strange hot street.

## Miss de Falla's Mail

She waited on the doorstep thinking. His bell might be out of order; she turned and beat on the knocker. It made a blunted sullen noise in the street, it interrupted the first musty sleep of the house. A lady next door put her head out of the window and looked disappointed. Somebody flicked cherry stones from a house across the road. It was so lonely.

Then a window on the first floor was raised and Miss de Falla asked timidly who did she want.

'I want Mr. Mann, please.'

'He's out at the moment, I think. Any message?'

'As a matter of fact I've come to . . .'

Miss de Falla leant further out and caught sight of the luggage.

'I'll be down in a minute,' she said in a practical voice.

When she appeared at the door in a kimono she was kindly and apologized for looking a sight with her tousled yellowy hair. She attempted to be ladylike in manner when she saw Anne's clothes; but on the way upstairs, because Anne seemed so breathless and uncertain, she called her 'dearie' in a way that was new: not intimacy or condescension – it was said in comradeship, as a man might speak to another man.

'You'd better come into my place, such as it is, until he comes back. To tell you the truth, my dear, I was having forty winks so as to be nice and fresh for the evening. Suppose we have a cup of tea?'

At one time Anne Garth worked in an institute in which her Aunt Atta was active, and thought therefore that one could speak to prostitutes

without difficulty (or, as Aunt Atta put it, without contamination). She listened to Miss de Falla's gramophone playing 'Stormy Weather,' saw the silk tassels, the odd blatancies and queer reticencies of the room which was only a home during the day, and fidgeted with her new hat while the tea was being made. She could not think what to say. She said 'Thank you for the tea' rather carefully, and 'Wasn't it hot in this street during the summer?' Bessie de Falla understood the hesitation, and began to talk about John in a neighbourly way.

'I don't see much of him,' she said. 'But when I do see him he's always very polite and considerate. Nearly every evening when he comes in he brings me my letters. And more often than not he leaves the milk in the morning. Do you know "Minnie the Moucher," dearie?'

'Me? Er – yes. But do play it. What time do you think he generally comes back, in the evenings I mean?'

'Somewhere about now. I expect we'll hear him in a minute. And you can jump out on him on the way up.'

She wound the gramophone and busied herself with tea. She was disinterested, doing a little service for her neighbour. She asked no questions, but found that she enjoyed being with a young girl who didn't belong and was shy.

They talked about Anne's new hat.

Why don't you come, my John. If you don't come now I shall scream in her face. I shall rush away and go. Where shall I go? John, I must come to you. You have been wanting me. I could feel your hands seeking for me in the night. Why don't you come?

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'Yes, I work in a club now,' said Miss de Falla. 'It's tough work. Very long hours. And you never know when you get to bed. I don't start till eleven-thirty. And then, of course, I come back here as soon as I'm lucky.'

'Eleven-thirty at night?'

'Of course, dear. And if trade's bad, business is slack. We don't seem to get going at all some nights. So we just sit there and take it in turns to make tea. And they don't give us any dance frock allowance. My God, what a life!'

At most times it would have been interesting. Anne's hesitating understanding and pity had once been sucked out of her by welfare and 'good' works. For several years she had come up to London two days a week and helped: she had been lulled and rather proud of her own security. But John had altered that. She was adult; her shyness was sincere. It was her woman's shame, her woman's pity for Bessie de Falla. She was blushing again. But she blushed because she was afraid she had not been concentrating, because she knew she was listening for the door downstairs. She did not encourage any more gramophone records.

Why didn't he come?

She opened the door a little when he came. Without a word to Bessie de Falla, she stood and waited for him to come upstairs. Bessie felt indescribably sad and wished she would go.

'Mind, it's dark,' he said suddenly, very loud. 'You haven't been here at night. Wait a sec., Patsy, let me go first, darling.' He was excited and breathless; he stumbled on to the

landing and a girl held tightly on to him. 'Letters, Miss de Falla!'

Anne Garth lay back against the wall. He didn't see her. He thrust letters round the door, and Bessie de Falla took them quickly. He slammed the door and laughed as he went upstairs.

'Give me your hat,' said Bessie sharply, 'you've nearly torn it in half, dearie. Give me your hat and sit down here.'

'He's not alone!'

'No, dear, perhaps he will be soon.'

'You don't believe that. Nor do I. I'm *not* going to cry. I'm *not*. I'm *not*.'

Bessie de Falla stood very still and waited, because she thought that Anne would faint and that would be the best way out. Anne did not faint. She thought she was going to die. She thought that her breath would stop. It was the end.

He's not alone. I mustn't go near him. You did not expect me, John. You did not think I would be faithful. To-night I would have pledged my faith. We were so strong. We needed fidelity. I expected a vow.

Miss de Falla opened the letter from the Gas Company; it was headed 'Third application' in red ink. 'Oh,' she said. 'That's extraordinary, we've got to close for to-night. Wonder they didn't let me know before. Club's being spring-cleaned.'

'Yes? Late for spring though.'

'Well, well. Anyway, you can stay here, my dear. I'll make this bed up. It is lucky I'm not working to-night.'

'But I can't. I can't stay *here*.'

'You mustn't cry. Wait till the

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morning, dearie. Where can you go?  
Could you go home?’

‘I left a note at home.’

‘All right, stay here. Sleep in that bed.’

Miss de Falla tore up the third application and was glad it was a slack mid-week night at the club. She made some more tea, gave Anne one of her own extra strong sleeping draughts for sleeping during the daytime.

After waiting quietly for half an hour, she wrote a little note to her neighbour, and took it up with rather loud, stupid apologies, saying how she found it in her post. Then she sat on her bed and listened for footsteps going downstairs.

Love can be an art, a faith, or an experienced trade. Anne Garth slept in the little gilded room too deeply to dream, too dreamlessly to hope.

# Mademoiselle du Plessis

## A Country Neighbour of the 17th Century in France

by Vittoria Colonna  
Duchesa di Sermoneta

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NEVER did poor Mademoiselle du Plessis imagine, even in her wildest dreams, that her name would be handed down to posterity, when she spent her grey existence – lonely and unloved – buried away in Brittany in the seventeenth century. Probably she would have preferred to be forgotten, as all that is recorded of her is her ugliness, her foolishness and her tiresome ways, and this by the sharpest pen that ever scribbled a letter. For she was a neighbour of the Marquise de Sévigné, who owned a country house called Les Rochers, and the Marquise was probably the best writer of frivolous letters that the world has ever known.

I do not know if her correspondence is familiar to the younger generation, but it is delightful reading. In her more brilliant days, when she lived in Paris and frequented the Court at Versailles, she wrote letters to her daughter that are vivid descriptions of the principal events of the day. Her daughter was the passion of her life, and as she lived in distant Provence,

where her husband, the Comte de Grignan, occupied an official post, the Marquise de Sévigné wrote to her practically every day, scraping together every morsel of news that might interest her beautiful and discontented child.

The Comtesse de Grignan did not appreciate life in her husband's old château in the South of France. Everyone knows of Madame de Sévigné's maternal love, but personally I think Madame de Grignan must have been detestable. Her mother praised her so persistently, and her friends laid on the jam of flattery with so lavish a spoon, that between them all they would have ruined the disposition of an angel. Madame de Grignan was constantly reminded of the beauty of her face and her hair and her teeth, also her grace when she danced the minuet, with a certain turn of the neck which was a special trick of hers. Her portrait by Mignard at the Musée Carnavalet shows her as an over-blown young woman with a pursed-up cherry lip, a vast quantity of little fair curls, and

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small, rather ill-natured eyes that glance sideways. Her brown taffetas dress is adorned with scarlet bows, and she affectedly holds out a bouquet of orange blossoms and red carnations: a reminder of Provence, no doubt. There is no portrait of her contemporary, the poor Mademoiselle du Plessis, so we must form our own conception of her.

I feel an infinite sympathy for the lonely spinster who lived in the little provincial town of Vitré, leading a sad and aimless existence. She had an unbounded admiration and love for her brilliant neighbour, and when the Marquise de Sévigné arrived from Paris it was the great event of her drab life. The dog-like devotion with which she greeted her was only rewarded by sour words and unkind jokes, which Mademoiselle du Plessis invariably and serenely interpreted as good-natured chaff. There is something grand about the way she refused to take offence, and now, two centuries and a half later, she stands out in a far different light to the one in which Madame de Sévigné, with all her sneers and ridiculous anecdotes, thought she had placed her.

The fact is that the Marquise de Sévigné was bored stiff in the country. She scribbled copiously, between 1670 and 1680, of the delight she got out of walking in the woods, but I have always suspected her of not being sincere in this. She minced slowly in trailing brocaded skirts along well-swept avenues, accompanied by a couple of maids and a man-servant, and, as she was extremely afraid of catching cold, she wore innumerable capes and coats and hoods. As soon as she decently could she hurried back to the house and wrote long letters in which she described

the charm of sitting near the moss-covered fountain and the colour of the foliage.

As a matter of fact, the plump, merry widow with her bunches of ash-coloured ringlets missed the brilliant society to which she was accustomed in Paris, the latest news that she was always the first to hear and the Court intrigues that interested her so passionately.

So when Madame de Sévigné had finished describing the beauties of Nature, she filled up the rest of her letters with catty little remarks about her country neighbour. Her rapid, thumb-nail sketches give us an admirable portrait of this lonely spinster of Brittany.

Mademoiselle du Plessis, whose christian name is never mentioned, must have been of the same age as Madame de Sévigné's daughter, *la belle Madelonne*, who later married the Comte de Grignan, Governor of Provence. The first glimpse we get is in the story of the slap which Madame de Sévigné tells with malicious delight in one of her letters, and which occurred when they were both children.

It seems that Mademoiselle du Plessis said something so aggravating to the beautiful Mademoiselle de Sévigné while thrusting her face close to hers – a tiresome habit she still kept in later years – that the other gave her a smart slap to make her retreat. Madame de Sévigné, 'to sweeten the situation', exclaimed gaily: 'But see how roughly these little girls play!' and when Madame du Plessis came to fetch her daughter in the afternoon said to her: 'Madame, these young creatures were quite mad this morning! Mademoiselle



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du Plessis teased my daughter, who beat her – it was the most amusing thing in the world!’ And so Madame du Plessis, who apparently was as simple-minded as her offspring, was made to swallow the slap, and be quite pleased that her little girl had had such a good time.

This is the only anecdote of childish days, for when in 1671 Madame de Sévigné takes up her abode at Les Rochers for several months her daughter is already married since some years and Mademoiselle du Plessis is an old maid.

On May 31st, 1671, Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter:

‘Mademoiselle du Plessis is exactly as you left her. She has a new friend at Vitré that she is very proud of as she is an intellectual who has read all the new novels and has also received two letters from the Princess of Tarente. I have been wicked enough to make Valliant tell her that I am jealous of this new friendship, but that I would not show it though my heart is wounded. What she says on the subject is worthy of Molière; it is most amusing to see the care with which she avoids wounding my feelings and cleverly turns the conversation so as not to speak of my rival before me! I also act my part extremely well.’ •

Then later: ‘Mademoiselle du Plessis is letting all her business at Vitré perish rather than put her feet there and make me jealous of her new friend, and even the other day, to put my mind entirely at rest, she spoke about her very badly. What she says every day about her fear of making me jealous is so original that I am in despair when there is no one else to hear and laugh

with me. *When the weather is fine it makes me laugh, but when it is raining I would willingly slap her as you did that day . . .*’

Poor Mademoiselle du Plessis! One cannot help feeling that she had a kinder soul than her brilliant neighbour. Everything she said and did was wrong in Madame de Sévigné’s eyes. One day the great lady sneeringly termed her ‘adorable’, because she had stated that Monsieur de Grignan was the best-looking young man it was possible to see. As a matter of fact, *la belle Madelonne* was already the third wife of the middle-aged Governor of Provence, and the shape of his nose was often the subject of pleasant raillery on the part of his mother-in-law, so for once the Marquise is somewhat justified in adding: ‘If you had heard her tone you would have given her a second slap! I am unlucky enough to sometimes say things that please her; I wish you could hear her praise and copy me! She also remembers certain things you said when you were here which she tries to serve up to us again with the same grace; alas! if there were not other things to remind me of you more forcibly, I would be happier.’

I feel there is something heroic in the persistence with which Mademoiselle du Plessis continued her visits to Les Rochers in spite of the snubs she received, but no doubt any change was welcome in the deadly monotony of her life. Madame de Sévigné told her that the smart thing at Court nowadays was complete liberty, so during her visits she would leave her alone and go off to read Italian with her other guest, La Mousse, but the damsel was charmed

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with this familiarity and felt she was at Versailles itself.

Madame de Sévigné's son, the real owner of Les Rochers, was also one of the poor lady's tormentors. On July 1st, 1671, when she arrived for her daily visit, and, as Madame de Sévigné puts it, *imprinted* on her the well-known kiss, the gay young officer had the audacity to remark:

'My sister remembers you most agreeably in her last letter!' and added, turning to his mother: 'Madame, show her the page so that she should not doubt it.'

Upon which Madame de Sévigné said she got scarlet and had to tell a thousand lies before she landed on the obvious one, which was to declare that she had burnt her daughter's letter. A few days later she wrote that Mademoiselle du Plessis always happened to be near her when the post arrived, and when she read Madame de Grignan's remarks about the damsel she blushed like fire.

But meal-times were the scene of Mademoiselle du Plessis's greatest feats in the line of sheer stupidity. One can imagine all this curled and periwigged house party, sitting through the interminable dinners of the seventeenth century, thoroughly depressed at being cut off from the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, then in its full splendour at Versailles.

The news occasionally received by a rare post had been discussed until it was threadbare, and the company passed the rest of the day reading the terribly dry religious books or the inane romances of that period. At this hour, therefore, Mademoiselle du Plessis was always welcome, for her

remarks aroused gusts of hilarity. In fact, Madame de Sévigné actually wrote one day when the sun must have been shining:

'My son begins to realize that the neighbourhood of this person is one of the beauties of Les Rochers. The fate of her family is to amuse us, for have I not told you how her father once made us die of laughing for six consecutive weeks?'

So the Brittany spinster held forth at dinner-time, and the company gleefully detected a resemblance between her and *Tartufe*, Molière's plays then being all the fashion. The hostess collected her remarks and repeated them at length in her letters to her daughter. Apparently Mademoiselle du Plessis's imagination ran riot and she made the most inaccurate statements. Madame de Sévigné caught her out one day and bluntly taxed her with being a liar. The poor lady answered with downcast eyes:

'Ah, yes, Madame, I am the greatest liar on earth, I thank you for reminding me of it,' and then the whole party exploded with laughter, for it was exactly *Tartufe's* tone when he exclaims: 'Yes, my brother, I am a miserable vase of iniquity . . .'

But nothing discouraged Mademoiselle du Plessis. On July 14th, 1671, her hostess described how she brightened up another dinner party by announcing that in Brittany people did themselves extremely well in the way of food, and that at her sister-in-law's wedding the guests had eaten in one day twelve hundred courses of roast meat. This time the company did not laugh; they sat like people turned to stone. Then the hostess, partially

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recovering from the shock, said:

'Mademoiselle, think it over again; surely you mean *twelve* courses? One can sometimes make a mistake.'

'No, Madame, it was either twelve hundred or eleven *hundred* courses. I do not want to insist on it being either twelve or eleven for fear of telling an untruth, but I know quite well that it was either one or the other!' and she repeated this twenty times, refusing to reduce the amount by a single chicken.

The company discussed the matter at length and worked out that at least three hundred cooks would have been required, for if they had only been fifty it would have taken them a month to prepare the feast, and it could only have been done in a vast number of tents pitched in a great field.

No doubt these statistics did not suppress Mademoiselle du Plessis in the least. According to Madame de Sévigné she was so false that it was doing her too much honour even to abuse her. She was 'always playing a part, pretending to be devout, timid, capable, a good sort, or to have a delicate chest,' but what chiefly enraged her hostess was when she imitated her, for, as she said: 'I feel I am looking at myself in a mirror that distorts and makes me ridiculous, or that I am calling to an echo that answers impertinences!'

No doubt *that day* it was raining!

But the season of 1671 ended sadly for Mademoiselle du Plessis, for the Duke of Chaulnes arrived in the neighbourhood, having been appointed Governor of Brittany, and as both he and the Duchess were friends of Madame de Sévigné – who amongst

other things was an inveterate snob – she no longer had any use for the poor damsel, even as a butt for rude jests. Her letters were now full of the doings of her dear friends the Duke and the Duchess. One can imagine how Mademoiselle du Plessis's jealous devotion must have suffered from this state of affairs!

Madame de Sévigné described to her daughter the surprise visit paid to her by the Duchess of Chaulnes. She said she was sitting alone in her room reading when the door gently opened and a tall lady entered half covering her face, next came a gentleman hiding behind her skirts, and the rear was brought up by an extremely good-looking girl. All three were laughing so uproariously that Madame de Sévigné dropped her book and began to laugh too, though she had not yet recognized any of her visitors. They turned out to be the Duchess of Chaulnes, a mutual friend called Monsieur de Pomenars, who was considered a great wag, and a girl she refers to as *la Murinette*. Great excitement, hilarity, and embraces followed, and Madame de Sévigné, having nothing else to tell her friends about, made a good story about her ridiculous neighbour, Mademoiselle du Plessis, and dished up the anecdote of the slap given to her by Madame de Grignan when they were both little girls. This caused Monsieur de Pomenars nearly to expire with laughter, and they immediately planned a practical joke on the poor old maid, who was sure to turn up later in the day.

A letter was concocted, supposed to be written in Paris, which related that the latest fashion was now for ladies to

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slap each other on the smallest provocation, and giving five or six instances of this occurring in the best society. The simple Mademoiselle du Plessis would probably welcome even a slap so as to be in the swim, and *la Murinette* declared that she was quite ready to administer it if she stuck her ugly face under her nose.

It is not recorded whether this unkind practical joke ever came off, and the Brittany spinster is no longer referred to in Madame de Sévigné's letters during the rest of her stay at Les Rochers.

Four years passed, during which the Marquise lived chiefly in Paris and continued to write abundantly to her daughter and sundry friends, giving news of the most celebrated people and interesting events of the day. In September of 1675 she finally returned to Les Rochers and was greeted by Mademoiselle du Plessis, who had been vegetating in her little provincial town all these years. No spark of kindness warmed Madame de Sévigné's heart on meeting her old friend, and she immediately wrote to her daughter with a pen dipped in gall.

'We arrived here on Thursday, and first of all I found Mademoiselle du Plessis more dreadful, more cracky and more impertinent than ever; her liking for me dishonours me, I swear I contribute nothing to encourage her, no sweetness, no friendship. I am abominably rude to her, but unfortunately she takes everything as a jest. She is therefore always near me, but I do not bother about her in the least, and I make her do a lot of tiresome jobs; she is now cutting me out some napkins.'

A week later Madame de Sévigné

had a new idea. 'Did I tell you of that admirable telescope that was our great amusement on the boat? You can imagine how I used it along the banks of the Loire, but here I have found another employment for it. You know if you look through the wrong end of a telescope things seem very distant, so I use it in that way to look at Mademoiselle du Plessis, who immediately appears to be two miles off. I played this prank on her and some other neighbours a few days ago, and it was very funny because none of them understood it at all; if only there had been someone in the know for me to throw a glance at, the joke would have amused me enormously.'

Monsieur de Sévigné was at Les Rochers with his mother, and seemed even more unkindly disposed towards their neighbour. He was evidently bored to death and passed his time adding postscriptums to his mother's letters. On December 8th, 1675, he wrote with positive ferocity:

'I would have nothing to tell you to-day, my little sister, if we had not spent the whole afternoon with Mademoiselle du Plessis, who is always charming and divine; this illustrious maiden that I am going to tell you about has something so strangely beautiful and so furiously agreeable in her that she can make a pair with the amiable Tisiphone.' (One of the three furies!) 'A leprosy that covers her mouth together with her eye makes one long for a parasol even in the midst of fogs. She is in despair, because this prevents her kissing our mother every quarter of an hour. She has a sort of plague on her arm that has kept her indoors for a long time; I have heard

## Vittoria Colonna

say that this has added to the value of Les Rochers as a residence. In this moment we are in hopes that she may start a fever, for she has already announced it to arouse our compassion. To show her strength of mind she has declared that she is quite prepared to spend her winter with alternately two days of health and one day of illness. As for ourselves, we foresee that in consequence we will have one day of ease against two of discomfort.'

In another letter this same gentleman tells of the arrival at Les Rochers of Mademoiselle du Plessis, who has been unwell and therefore absent since several days. The simple-minded creature proceeded to give him intimate details of her illness that are too . . . rustic to be reproduced here, though he hastens with impish glee to write them to his sister.

During her absence her place as companion to Madame de Sévigné had been taken by a pretty little girl whose name is never mentioned. Both the Marquise and her son refer to her as the 'little person', and he adds that her eyes do not remind him in the least of those of Mademoiselle du Plessis. This new arrival in the household turned out to be another stick with which to beat the poor old maid!

In Madame de Sévigné's words: . . . 'she was dying of jealousy and asking all the servants for information of how she - Madame de Sévigné - treated the "little person".' They all enjoyed giving her dagger thrusts. One said that she loved her as much as her own daughter, another that she made her sleep in her room (Madame Sévigné shrewdly remarks that this

would be indeed the greatest proof of her affection!), another invented that she was to be taken to Paris, that Madame kissed her and was wild about her, that the old priest, Madame's uncle (they called him '*le bien bon*' in the family and I often wonder what he thought of all these cruel jokes!), had given her ten thousand francs, and that if only she had twenty thousand *écus* Madame would marry her to her son. And so, even with the servants, the unfortunate Mademoiselle du Plessis becomes a sort of 'Aunt Sally' at which missiles are flung, and each time one of the household could think of a new stab to give her pain they flew to tell Madame all about it so that she had 'many good laughs'. No one believed in Mademoiselle du Plessis's fever, but they thought with all this teasing she might really get a bout of it, which seemed to them excruciatingly funny.

Monsieur de Sévigné adds another postscript to his mother's letter of January 5th, 1676:

'You will never realize, my little sister, how funny what you say about the du Plessis really is until you know that she has been pretending to have fever for a month, so as to *cease* having it the day my mother came to dine with her. The joy of seeing my mother at Plessis transported her, and so she swore by all the gods that she was now quite well and only in despair at not being properly dressed. "But, Mademoiselle," said I, "don't you feel a shiver beginning?" "Come on, come on!" answered Tisiphone gaily; "let us enjoy ourselves, let us play at battledore and shuttlecock, do not let us speak of my fever, she is a naughty little thing,

## Mademoiselle du Plessis

a regular pusher!" "A *pusher*?" said my mother with surprise. "Yes, Madame, a pusher, who always wants to fasten on to me." "I thought she was just being kind-hearted," said my mother softly. And so the joy of having company drove away the fever she never had. We hope that excessive jealousy may give it her in earnest, but we are quite frightened that she may poison the little person who is here and who is generally nick-named "the little favourite of Madame la Princesse and Madame de Sévigné." (The writer was a snob like his mother.) She said yesterday to Rahuel: "I had only one comfort when we sat down to dinner, Madame pushed away the little girl to make room for me." Rahuel answered with her Breton accent: "Ah, Mademoiselle, I am not surprised! It was to honour your age, and besides the little girl is now one of the household – Madame treats her as though she were a younger sister of Madame de Grignan." "

It is quite sad to think of the lonely old maid looking forward with such passionate pleasure to having her unkind neighbours to dinner; giggling, fussing, trying to entertain them by leaping about and playing games while probably feeling quite ill as she did so, and all the time blissfully unconscious of their fierce criticism.

I feel it was a judgment on Madame de Sévigné when a short time later she fell ill herself. No one suggested that *she* was pretending – such is the unfairness of the world! – so she was fussed over and looked after by her son and the old priest, her uncle. The 'little person' apparently was not much good as a nurse, for whenever Madame

de Sévigné's rheumatic pains got worse she only wept copiously out of sympathy, and Mademoiselle du Plessis continued to hate her with a sombre loathing.

One January evening Madame de Sévigné was dozing in her big four-posted bed while her son, the old uncle, and the little girl were sitting by the fire. The door opened and the irrepressible Mademoiselle du Plessis poked her head round it. They beckoned to her to come in gently, and when she was in the middle of the room Madame de Sévigné awoke with a cough and asked for her handkerchief in which to spit.

Her son and the 'little person' jumped up to help her, but Mademoiselle du Plessis got to the bed first, and instead of putting the handkerchief to the invalid's mouth she applied it to her nose and pinched it so violently that the lady shrieked with pain.

I wonder whether that day Mademoiselle du Plessis was less simple and good than usual, and just for once saw a golden opportunity of getting a bit of her own back!

Soon afterwards the Sévigné's left, and strangely enough exactly another four years passed before the Marquise returned to Les Rochers, this time alone. Her son remained at Fontainebleau, from where he wrote that Corneille's plays charmed all the Court, but that he would rather be with his mother; a little bit of flattery that does not quite go down, for she remarked ironically:

'I admire that he would rather spend his afternoon as I do between Mademoiselle du Plessis and Made-

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moiselle de Launaie sooner than in the midst of all that is good and beautiful.'

For Mademoiselle du Plessis was always there, a bit older and more unattractive than ever, but ever faithful in her unswerving affection.

The poor thing had lost her mother, and, swathed in deep mourning, she spent most of her time dissolved in tears. To add to her unhappiness she had fallen out with the rest of her family – whoever they were – over the inheritance, but all this aroused no sympathy in Madame de Sévigné. She merely noted that Mademoiselle du Plessis made a great muddle of all her words, saying that 'the others had treated her *like* a barbarity, *like* a cruelty,' and added as an epitaph on the late Madame du Plessis that she had left behind her a very ridiculous daughter, who was also impertinent.

It seems to me that all the impertinence was on the other side, for the poor spinster's remarks were very humble, and if she had ever made others in a different tone they surely would have been recorded with indignation.

During the summer of 1680 Madame de Sévigné continued to make catty remarks about her poor neighbour. She declared that she was ashamed of the friendship Mademoiselle du Plessis had for her and was sometimes haunted by a thought that alarmed her: *could there be any resemblance between them?* (I presume she asked this question for the pleasure of being assured she was vastly different.) She is always talking, but by the grace of

God Madame de Sévigné has the same characteristic as her daughter: they are able to abstract themselves and not listen to bores.

One evening the maids came to tell Madame de Sévigné that it was very warm out of doors, without a breath of wind, and the moonlight as bright as day; would she not come for a walk in the woods and see the lights and shadows? The Marquise succumbed to this adventurous suggestion, and, writing at length all about it to her daughter, she also gave a detailed list of the many cloaks she muffled herself up in – on a hot June night! Her description of the moonlight avenues is really very charming, for she told of the monks and nuns and knights and fine ladies and little men she saw flitting before her, that always turned out to be rocks or tree trunks, but she could not resist finishing her tale with one of the usual digs: 'Mademoiselle du Plessis has retired to her convent and I prefer these nocturnal figures to hers.'

Only once more does she mention the poor lady, when in July of the same year she wrote: 'Mademoiselle du Plessis has returned from her convent, what more can I say?'

After that I have searched for her name in vain, but it never reappears. When Madame de Sévigné returned to Les Rochers for the last time in 1689, her letters never alluded to Mademoiselle du Plessis. Did she finally retire to a convent for good? It is very probable.

Ugly, silly, unloved, done out of her lawful inheritance by unscrupulous

## Mademoiselle du Plessis

relations, with no real friends, let us make fun of her weaknesses and take  
hope she found peace when the gates pleasure in giving her pain, as did  
of the cloister closed behind her. these smart ladies and gentlemen from  
There she may have ended her days Paris who enjoyed tormenting her for  
among kindlier souls, who would not so many years.



# Reviews

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THE REIGN OF KING GEORGE THE FIFTH,  
AN ENGLISH CHRONICLE By D. C.  
SOMERVELL. Faber. 12s 6d.

HISTORY flows from the interaction of three main sources: life, politics and the historian's point of view.

Mr. Somervell is careful to call his work a Chronicle, and to explain in his preface that his 'sequence of events is mainly political in the wider sense of the term,' and that he has omitted 'very much the greater part of what might have been included under the heading of manners and customs, modes of fashions and modes of thought' because he felt that 'there was in what I had included quite enough to make a book.'

There was indeed enough to make a very large book, but the substitution of 'manners and customs' for the intricacies of Parliamentary detail would have transformed it from a work of reference, valuable, accurate, and desiccated, into a means of understanding the years between 1910 and 1925. It is, of course, lamentably true that politics are remote from the vast flux of daily life: nevertheless, the changing movements of thought, of feeling and of habit do ultimately record themselves upon public affairs, even if it be in a tracery as delicate as that in which an earthquake is registered on a seismograph.

Mr. Somervell thinks in terms of the electorate rather than of the community: even so, the political events which he displays like a collection of dried plants in a botany-book were once rooted in the context of the electorate's ideas and assumptions. His account of post-war history, for instance, would stand out far more vividly, sharply and solidly if he

were even to hint at the innumerable influences at work from within and without upon the matter-of-course conceptions of the average man. From without came an enormous development of advertising, playing upon such primitive instincts as pride, emulation, fear and lust: the increase of cinemas, the advent of talkies, which directly touch the naked personality, without the intervention of print: the growth of broadcasting, making possible passive mental massage at home. From within came the new theories of psychology, flavouring everyday language with such pervasive words as complex, inhibition, intravert and defence-mechanism, and combining with the discovery of a connection between glandular secretions and types of character to produce both fatalism and a profound distrust in reason. The consequent flight from reason went in many directions: it increased the demand for Direct Action which culminated in the General Strike of 1926, it deified the sex instinct with Lawrence, the herd instinct with Communism, the machine with America: and transformed itself presently into romanticism. The first signs of the change in this country were the production of *Bittersweet*, the fashion for films and plays about Vienna, and the supersession of jazz by waltz-music. Abroad, people after people found in rapt obedience to a dictator a dangerous satisfaction for their emotions; here, the habitual national affection for the King became conscious, and the desire for a leader was focussed upon a man who was, in hereditary monarchy, physically as well as mentally the incarnation of England.

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In only one place, however, does Mr. Somervell write of imponderables: he devotes a whole chapter to the rejection of the Church of England's Alternative Prayer-book by a number of Nonconformists from Scotland, Wales and Ulster, led by the unspeakable Joynson-Hicks. This controversy, articulate, formalised, defined, did not sway the depths of the community's life, in spite of the strong feeling it excited amongst Anglicans.

This defect of taking into account only the articulate impoverishes the whole book. Even in politics, it is chiefly the activities of Parliament which are chronicled, with the names of politicians, the complexities of personal intrigue, the use of technicalities of procedure to prevent the passage of such important non-party measures as female suffrage. The banks come nominally into the story, but the fact of their immense irresponsible power is slurred over. Even in Parliament, though the vicissitudes of the Parliament Act and the reform of the House of Lords are discussed, the pre-war sale of titles is admitted, and the Marconi scandal is related, no mention is made of Mr. Belloc's significant and unsuccessful struggle for the public auditing of party funds.

So much for life, and for its precipitate politics: now for the historian's point of view. For my own part, I share Jane Austen's preference for 'a partial prejudiced and passionate historian.' He argues, and obviously there is another side. One can agree or disagree with him. One knows in what faintly distorting mirror his facts are seen reflected. Mr. Somervell is fairly impartial, temperate and cool. He is careful not to obtrude his opinions, but cannot conceal his assumption that a moderate Conservative capitalism, or, as he calls it, 'a Socialism of the Right,' is the policy of all sensible men. He is scrupulously fair to his opponents in what he says, and criticises them rather

by omission than by vituperation. In writing of the coal strike of 1926, for instance, he portrays Mr. Baldwin as an innocent and helpless would-be peacemaker, and states that 'the Government could do no more': when obviously several courses were open to it besides that of referee in an unequal contest. The mines could have been compulsorily nationalised: the owners could have been bought out: or a sliding scale of wages, like that of the railwaymen, could have been prescribed by law.

Mr. Somervell never draws conclusions and rarely generalises: he lets facts speak for themselves, and though this is on occasion both chaotic and deafening, certain voices echo clear and significant through the noise. One of these, appalling in its illumination of pre-war mentality, is that of Lord Lansdowne, 'regretfully admitting the Old Age Pensions to the Statute Book, and declaring that they would cost as much as a war without a war's advantages, since "war has the effect of raising the moral fibre of the nation, whereas this measure will weaken the moral fibre and diminish the self-respect of the people"'!

The sections devoted to India are detailed, objective and lucid: that upon Egypt combines a real and rather surprising sympathy for the Nationalists with the knowledge that the custody of the Suez Canal is vital to Britain: and those dealing with Ireland do not only petrify in words the molten circumstance of twenty-five years, but show an understanding of Mr. de Valera's 'preference for the country against the town, for the field against the factory,' and compare him in this connection with such diverse figures as Mr. Gandhi and Herr Hitler. There is an able account of the growth of the Labour Party, 'the offspring of an alliance between Socialism and the Trades Unions: between men who believed in a fundamental reorganisation of society' and

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men organised to demand higher wages for the working-classes. And there is an appreciation of the King, 'the one representative of the nation, who, not being elected, represents, not a majority, but all.'

For the rest, perhaps the most interesting thing to watch about the passing crowds of facts is their slow haphazard drift before 1914. the coherent marching of wartime: the sudden dancing and jigging and rushing of the first years of peace. It is apparent that the centralisation of war kept the human imagination too tightly stretched; and that the snap-back to parochial nationalism was in part the effect of exhaustion. It is also apparent that the reality of war was too sharp to be endured in consciousness, and that the peoples who had doped themselves against it with such symbols as flags turned to dope themselves against the difficulties of peace with such other symbols as money, and half starved one another in fierce drugged dreams. Thus France impoverished both Germany and herself by the accumulation of gold: America bled Europe and ruined her own export trade, and, by her fantastic belief that stocks and shares were of intrinsic, instead of representative value, brought on the crash of 1929.

Mr. Somervell's book is disappointing as the interpretation of a period, but most interesting as a record compiled with relevant humour. If it were given several really good maps, it would be fascinating.

THE LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS  
TO ROBERT BRIDGES: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS WITH R. W. DIXON. Oxford University Press. 2 Vols. 30s.

THE name of Gerard Manley Hopkins has become one of the 'powers behind the throne' of poetry. His posthumous influence has increased year by year, but his

intrinsic value as a poet and his stature as a personality have remained but have not been fully investigated. The *Life* by Father G. F. Lahey, S.J., was an excellent account of the incidents of Hopkins' career; but that book, together with Robert Bridges' annotations to the *Poems*, leave the reader thirsty for more intimate and comprehensive knowledge of the poet and his work. These two volumes of correspondence go to gratify that curiosity.

Hopkins, the poet, was like a surgeon. Fitted by nature with good hands, a sensitive and responsive eye and a talent for original expression, he practised his art with sincerity, accuracy and intelligence. The character of his images, daring, intense and searching, bear testimony to his keen interest and curiosity, not only of present performance, but also of the precedent of tradition and a future orientation. In him, in Bridges (who was a doctor) and in Dixon, a priest, there was a scrupulous scientific approach to life; here their only peers among the older poets of this generation are Browning and Patmore; but the three younger friends were purer in their science, comparatively uninfluenced either by romance or sentiment. These letters are full of shop, written to men to whom every word of criticism and observation was of high importance.

Robert Bridges, R. W. Dixon and Manley Hopkins were drawn closely together in this common interest. They formed a group only in their relation to poetry and criticism; their correspondence subordinated to a great extent the affairs of their differing ways of life. Hopkins met Bridges at Oxford, and this association produced a more personal friendship than with Canon Dixon, whom he had met earlier as a teacher in the Highgate School where he was educated. The letters to Dixon began by being formal in tone, but gained both in intimacy and technical observation as the friendship

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between the older and younger man ripened in mutual respect and admiration. We have Dixon's letters here as well as Hopkins'.

The letters to Robert Bridges (his replies have not been preserved) are from the time of Hopkins' conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1866 till his death in 1889. They cover, with very few gaps, the whole of his adult life; and after the preliminary upheaval of his conversion, very little incident is reflected in them. To Bridges in his maturing years Hopkins was an unfailing and trustworthy critic, always ready to substantiate his friend's doubts or to criticize with some asperity the questionable errors in the expression and content of the future poet laureate's work. It is evident that there was a great warmth of friendship between them, which religious differences in no way obscured. The most striking fact which appears from the letters is the poet's enthusiasm toward his faith, his order and his poetry. One is sometimes tempted to question what would have been his measure as an artist had he not become so absorbed in this enthusiasm for the rigours of Jesuit life, had he not accepted so conclusively the coin of Roman Catholicism: would he have been a greater poet? The answer to the reader of these letters leaves no doubt that he was first a Catholic, then a poet. He might have been Marxist or Buddhist or Christian Scientist, his specific expression would not have been increased or diminished; he was an individual who would be bound to seek rigid principles, the authority of precedent and the inspiration of a form.

Realizing his gift for poetry, he practised a greater proficiency. His singleness and his exclusion of the world may be said to have curtailed his experience as a man and writer, but that very act of singleness fertilized his expression; and the rigour and self-denial of Jesuit life were the source of energy in his work, that control which makes him so original

and startling a figure for his period. In 1879 he writes to Bridges:

I think then no one can admire beauty of the body more than I do, and it is of course a comfort to find beauty in a friend or a friend in beauty. But this kind of beauty is dangerous. Then comes the beauty of the mind, such as genius, and this is greater than the beauty of the body and not to call dangerous. And more beautiful than the beauty of the mind is beauty of character, the 'handsome heart' . . .

This is not a fugitive acceptance of safety, but rather a formulation of danger, and that danger is a cutting edge of the artist's discernment. Whether he turns to the discipline of the priesthood or other ordered life or to the infinite licence of a career of pleasure, the true artist must acquire this keen and dangerous edge. His execution may be ultimately decided by his choice of environment. This is the sensible control which directs his consciousness. Gerard Manley Hopkins led a busy and disciplined life, and his sense of duty was his valid reason for not publishing any of his work during his lifetime. The same sense of duty at one time prevented him from writing, but this restraint was temporary and *necessary*, having its origin in a profound religious experience.

These letters show him to have been a conscientious worker, informed and indeed expert in the experiments in prosody for which he has become famous. It is clear that he, more than anyone in his time, concerned himself with the integrity of every word in his composition. This conscientiousness made his re-orientation of rhythm all the more valuable, and although his output does not place him among the greatest of English poets, his influence on succeeding generations of poets has been considerable and one of the most valuable contributions to modern English prosody. These letters, admirably edited by Mr. Claude Abbott, may well

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become a primer of workshop criticism and an example of an attitude towards prosody which must be the poet's ideal.

NOTHING LIKE LEATHER. By V. S. PRITCHETT Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.

THE BLACK CONSUL. By A. VINOGRADOV. Gollancz. 8s. 6d.

SOLDIER'S WIFE. By CONAL O'RIORDAN. Arrowsmith. 7s. 6d.

THE POACHER By H. E. BATES. Jonathan Cape. 7s. 6d.

A HOUSE DIVIDED. By PEARL S. BUCK. Methuen. 7s. 6d.

A LONDON STORY. By GEORGE BUCHANAN. Constable. 7s. 6d.

MR. V. S. PRITCHETT's latest novel is called *Nothing Like Leather*, and it is of a very high quality indeed. The style is both fresh and mellow. Great insight makes Mr. Pritchett wise, and his wisdom makes him merry. Perfection of phrase delights again and again, and it is never a trick, but always the play of integrity of judgment. The story turns about a tannery, its owners, and their affairs. Most prominent of all is Mathew Burkle who comes as the least assured of young employees, rises to be a director, then when the business is at last to escape beyond his control, his deeply acquisitive nature is so sorely frustrated that he blunders into one of his own vats and so dies. All through the book there is a sense of the logic of life; the confusion of Henrietta, the daughter of the tannery owner, bringing her one confused relationship after another. The self-deception of these people, their half-meetings and recoils, are shown as inherent in their natures. Mr. Pritchett has the gift of reality, and in him it is that rare clarity of the creative artist through whom emotion is seen to rise into action,

then ebb and flow in the obscure currents of circumstance. The plot can be left to be enjoyed by those who are wise enough to buy the book, and they will be roused to the keenest agreement and charmed by pithy understatement. The quarrel between Mathew Burkle and his wife is perfectly done and the attitude of the children toward their parents' warfare is exactly right; then the delectable absurdity of the scene where two visionaries smell burning, thinking one of them must have dropped his cigarette, each insist the other undress to make sure, and only when they stand coatless and vestless do they remember that neither of them were smoking. All these incidents are delights by the way, the true merit of the book lying rightly in the sound development of each character, and the sapient comment and sharp thrust of Mr. Pritchett's understanding of them.

Mercifully enough life limits the amount of our experience by our individual capacity. In *The Black Consul* Mr. Vinogradov is not half so kind, for he pours upon us almost every distinguished figure in the French Revolution, countless obscure folk as well, then opens out the entire negro rebellion in San Domingo, and by way of cramming down what is clearly more than can be contained, he includes much of what one supposes to be historical data. Speeches in the Assembly, diaries, and letters are printed in full so that the flow of his story is constantly choked. His knowledge of his subject is wide and his ability as a dramatic writer is outstanding, yet one reads him with something far from acceptance. One vivid incident follows another inconsequently so that nothing is developed enough or everything too much. A great deal of it may be information, but its plenitude, and the way in which it is handled turns it to noise and violence. One misses the well judged choosing that clarifies. Amid a recounting of brutality

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so general that humanity seems for ever tainted by the cruelties of its past, Mr. Vinogradov makes his main theme the negro rebellion in Haiti. He presents his negroes as noble figures, while their leader Toussaint L'Ouverture is a great general and a saint. The treacherous treatment they received at the hands of the whites is crushing to the mind. Our crimes against the black people are so many, and are for the most part so unrecognized that it is well we should learn of their great men, but the matter is offered in such a fevered hurly-burly that one's emotions appear to be attacked in order that one's judgment may be obscured. Does such a distributing of superlative virtues to the blacks and despicable vices to the whites not amount to interpreting history with a purpose? Again and again the impression is given that the author is using his ability and his knowledge as a vantage point from which to conduct an assault. At first one is only aware that missiles are being thrown and then as the drama mounts one comes to feel that this story of the rebellion of the black people is a direct incitement to them to revolt a second time. The interest of the book is undeniable, but there is an aspect of it about which one hardly dares to think.

In *Soldier's Wife* David Quinn returns to Dublin after an absence of twenty years. He is the only survivor of Captain Morgan's attempt to find the Northwest Passage, and the tragedy of his time in the Arctic, added to the disfiguring face wound which he received at Waterloo, have made him unwilling to return to his family. When he arrives he is received by his father Sir Desmond Quinn with a flow of mocking raillery that makes the early chapters delicious reading. If it is true that the Irish live for conversation the capacity for such charmingly shameless chatter as that of Sir Desmond justifies them in their occupation. As many

appreciative people know, this is the third volume on the Quinn family, and Mr. O'Riordan presents his aged and impudent rake with such a perfection of skill that the first part of the book could hardly be bettered. There is point and precision in the writing, grace and dignity in the speech, while the supple wit is most excellent pastime. But then that blessed reprobate Sir Desmond dies and we are left with Sir David who might as well have been Sir Galahad. A man of fifty with the heart of an idealistic boy might be pleasant enough, but nobleness need not be pushed to the point of imbecility, and one is naturally aggrieved after having been charmed by the sins of Sir Desmond to be put off with the flavourless virtue of this man David. He has held Ruth Irwin in hallowed memory for twenty years and on his return he immediately falls in love with Ruth's stirring daughter. But does he know he loves her? Shame on the thought! She is half engaged to his unstable brother, and David, being too nice to look into his own mind busies himself with trying to make them marry. She has sense and knows that she loves David, and that he loves her. She is also keenly alive to conditions in Ireland and the street life in Dublin is so brilliantly described that it is a hundred pities the story is not permitted to develop with an Irish background. But Mr. O'Riordan packs all his people off for a Continental tour and for three-quarters of the book one is obliged to accompany them on their sight-seeing expeditions, while David uses every odd moment to try to get rid of the woman he wants. On the last page Ruth Irwin's bright blade of a daughter is driven to seducing David just by way of clearing his mind. One does not dare think what Sir Desmond's comment would have been.

Mr. H. E. Bates writes with such businesslike sobriety, saying so directly

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and capably what he has to say, that one wonders why *The Poacher* leaves one unmoved. It may be that the defiant, roystering figure who rebels against society to the extent of never working, but most consummately poaching, almost amounts to a reliable recipe. A rebel is the favourite hero of our inner hearts, especially if we do not have to follow his ways, and a really good poacher is likably near to natural man. The night raids on rabbits through capitably described country make enjoyable reading. The book begins with Buck Bishop, who was a great poacher, and continues with his son Luke who was rather a poor thing. There is something very disturbing in fiction's quick glance at these splendidly lawless fathers, now dreadfully vanished, only to dwell at great length on their conscience-ridden sons. (Have other generations cried 'Oh that we could sin with the valour of the past?') Buck Bishop having died, Luke finds that he drew his life from his father and without him is lost. For a while he drifts listlessly, then flying from the cries of his sister's confinement, he goes blindly into the countryside his father had taught him to know so well. Coming on the murdered body of a keeper his father had been heard to threaten he runs desperately, is seen, and, driven to panic, pushes on to an isolated farm where a friend of his father shelters him. He stays until the true culprit has been found and here he is married by a young woman who has an itch to get on in the world. There may not be many certainties in life, but novelists are convinced one of them is that woman plays a pitilessly predatory rôle in love. Marriage stirs Luke to hard work and on a small plot of land he wrests a living for his wife and child. The wife's ambitious gentility hardens her into a barb, the daughter marries a man of our modern, efficient, organized world, Luke returns to poaching and

again has no place in society. Mr. Bates's descriptions of the countryside at night put us in his debt.

Mrs. Buck has once more written of the Wang family in *A House Divided*, and like all her other books, it is a careful, solid piece of work. The fact that Wang Yuan is of our times, spends six years in England, and returns to face the new world that is forming in China does make for a certain disenchantment. Mrs. Buck has by her calm and measured studies made us feel that we learned reliably from her of a fascinatingly different race. In the early chapters, when Wang Yuan breaks with his father Wang the Tiger, we have the same sense of seeing clearly a civilization we know too little and much of whose wisdom is fast passing away. Wang Yuan declares that he belongs to himself, not to his family, and refuses to lend his body that his father may have grandchildren. This desperate avowal is followed by his rushing from the home of his youth, and going to the learned lady who is one of the wives of his father and who lives in a great coastal city. Here he is confronted with modernity. He becomes a revolutionist, though against his temperate nature; is almost battered into a love affair by a revolutionary maiden, resists, but on her arrest she betrays him to the authorities. His family eventually buy his release from prison and he leaves for an English University. The spell of Chinese manners and morals holds up to here, though Mrs. Buck's style tends more and more to monotony, and much as one appreciates the care of her writing, those close-packed pages of hers are somewhat too burdened with detail and would be the better for elimination. When Yuan arrives in England his impressions are still interesting, but he has the widely shared ill-fortune of viewing a new country from a boarding-house. The types he encounters are undubitably true, but they are not important. He is again made

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love to, this time by a young American. The more he sees of a life that is foreign to him the more truly he feels a man of his own race, and his return to China shows him his country in a new light, and he knows the part he wishes to take in its changing. The quality of the book again improves in the final scenes with the dying Wang the Tiger, and they deal delightfully with Yuan's love for a young medical student. Her absorption in reform and satisfaction with her own impersonal interests arouse in him the baffled sense of wrong that men seem to feel when a woman appears to be complete in herself. For everyone's comfort let it be said at once that she melts finally.

It is not without a dismayed amusement that one views the amorous affairs recounted in this group of novels. Love never comes as quickened insight, and no one ever gets within a thousand miles of a relationship which forms between two people so that they are mutually extended; but rather is there on the part of each young person a ravening need of swallowing someone, the girls being the hungrier and the hollower, and they set out in pursuit of a haphazardly chosen prey with a threatening cry of 'It might as well be you!' The struggles of the party of the second part to escape, and the indigestion that comes after the swallowing, to the party of the first part, constitutes the love affair. It reveals the possibility of a most assuaging union between two people based solely on a promise never to love each other.

Mr. Buchanan sets in sharp relief those to whom life is a simple matter of 'go-getting' and those to whom it is a richer, subtler, more profound and greatly more difficult affair. The elder of two brothers, John Coombe, is an apostle of efficiency; for him all the brittle, metallic clichés of the 'get-on-or-get-out' school of business are articles of faith. The younger brother, Nicholas, for a long time does not know

what he wants; he experiences only the vague unrest and melancholy which arise from living in an environment to which one is not properly adjusted. He cannot identify himself with the scale of values epitomized by the store for which he works; some quirk of humour prevents him from taking seriously the unctuous platitudes which cloak from the public the naked game of grab. The clash of temperaments between Nicholas and Lord Flowerfield – a rather farcical, overdrawn character – ends in Nicholas' dismissal and there follows for him a period of protracted unemployment, described with a sympathy and insight which make these chapters the most memorable part of the book. It is not the physical, but the psychological aspect of unemployment which is presented; above all the terrible loneliness, the sense of 'not-belonging' which engulfs Nicholas slowly like the stealthy sucking-in of a bog from which he cannot extricate himself. In the end Nicholas finds himself, and his, his, while John, the assuasive, the self-assured, is himself, with all that he has held to be of value.

Each brother is helped in his progress by a woman, though the experience of unemployment has carried Nicholas a long way on the journey of self-discovery. The two women, Beryl, who marries John, and Phillida, who at length marries Nicholas, are also strongly contrasted types. Beryl, indeed, is almost wholly a type, an epitome of all that is hard, cruel, mean and calculating, too conclusively odious to be credible. Her portrait is the least successful thing in the book, and though the drawing of Phillida is subtler and much fuller of diversity, the juxtaposition of these two fundamentally opposed types of women with the two brothers, also ranged in opposite camps, makes a somewhat mechanical arrangement. But this is a minor blemish in a book which is memorable for the sincerity



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which gives dignity to every page, for the keen but quiet satire which exposes our meretricious standards and our stupid acquiescence in them, and for an appreciation of beauty which is implicit in every sentence.

MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD. By SELMA LAGERLOF. Werner Laurie. 12s. 6d. Translated by VELMA SWANSTON HOWARD.

THERE is a passage in *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Ride* where Selma Lagerlof sums up the life of the Swedish manor farms in the last century :

'Nowhere else in the world do they know how to get so much out of life as they did at one of those little homesteads in my childhood. . . . There was just enough work and just enough play, and a joy for every day.'

'Just enough work and just enough play' – what a recipe for happiness! Yet it is certain that most readers of Selma Lagerlof's books, were they to find themselves in one of those little Varmland farms which she describes so lovingly, would consider the life impossibly monotonous and primitive. How far such monotony is deadening, and how far it is the necessary soil from which anything of lasting worth springs, is a debatable point. The ploughboy with no aspirations beyond ploughing may tread the furrows all his days, thinking of 'nowt in particular' except his dinner. To other natures the slow procession of country days and a simple, routine life provide the background against which people and events stand out in their complete value – as trees and buildings do in a level landscape.

As preparation for the imaginative novelist such a training ground is of immense importance, and one wonders what the green-house methods of to-day, with a non-stop variety of ready-made

amusements, will produce in their place. A child with few distractions is capable of such intense concentration on a picture, a book or the view from its nursery window that the outside world is seen *in the round*, instead of flicking past in the manner of a cinematograph. Such a child may grow up, like Selma Lagerlof, with a sense of the significance of life, and the power of extracting from the simplest herbs honey of unearthly sweetness.

In *Memories of my Childhood*, Miss Lagerlof continues the story of her early years, as related in *Marbacka*. Both books are packed with the raw material of her novels. *Marbacka*, home of the Lagerlof family, was a one-storeyed building with a 'small, round duck pond' near the door. A plan of the ground floor shows five rooms (including the kitchen and the kitchen-bedroom) with the exact disposition of the console table in the parlour, the clavichord, and the card table in the dining-room, and the bureau in Aunt Lovisa's room, which the carpenter had made from the wood of an old apple tree. How all the household – the family, the governess, the maid-servants and the cousins who came to stay – fitted in is a puzzle: certainly there was something very special about *Marbacka*. It had passed from generation to generation of the same family and preserved a high standard of culture, for all its simple ways. There might be winters when the thermometer sank to 40 degrees below zero, and the post was delayed by snowstorms, but we hear of the 'male quartette and the brass sextette'; of theatricals, speeches and poems composed for birthday festivities, and the rigorous study of foreign languages.

If you were a little girl who had two new dresses a year – a cotton frock in the spring and a woollen one in the autumn – what an event were the visits of Maja Rad, the seamstress, with her hoopskirt and her German fashion magazine. The yarn

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from which those winter dresses were made had been spun and dyed at Marbacka, and again we are reminded of *Nils Holgersson* and Selma Lagerlof's own words: 'They had spun flax, but had sung folk-song as they spun. They had cultivated grain, but also roses and jasmine. . . . They had lived by themselves, and this was why so many stories and legends were stored away in their memories.'

Those stories and legends, which were to give Miss Lagerlof the material for her greatest books, are hinted at in these childish memories: we see traces of 'Gosta Berling' in the maid-servant's tale of the woodcutter who had 'some kind of agreement' with the Devil, and something of an epic quality creeps into the simplest farm happenings at Marbacka. In the account of the digging of the well, of the strong man who dug it and was struck blind, and of the friendless girl who waited for him and cared for him, we are reminded of that exquisite story of Selma Lagerlof's - *Liliecrona's Home*. Here is the same theme: the strength of love over the dark, unfriendly forces of nature.

This book fascinates the reader with its picture of a foreign culture, and reminds him, at the same time, that children are much the same the world over. In church, on Sunday, when 'the grown-ups are so used to being bored that it does not matter,' one child passes the time by 'counting the spikeheads on the ceiling'; another 'adds the numbers on the hymn-board', while Selma imagines herself the heroine of a thrilling incident in which she extinguishes single-handed a fire in the building and is praised for her bravery in the *Varmland News*.

The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, but to few people is given the power of setting them down in the way that 'Aunt Nana' of this book tells her stories, so that 'whatever she says, even the humorous things, somehow become strangely touching.'

THE BOURGEOIS MIND AND OTHER STUDIES IN MODERN LIFE. By NICHOLAS BERDYAEV. Sheed & Ward. 3s. 6d.

NICHOLAS BERDYAEV foresees a revolution, but a revolution caused by the eternal revolutionary, Christianity. There are many obstacles in his way, of which the most formidable is the behaviour of Christians. An important step in bettering this behaviour is the elimination of the 'bourgeois mind.' Berdyaev repudiates the Marxist conception of the word bourgeois and defines it as a spiritual rather than an economic state. It designates a direction of the soul away from cultural and spiritual development towards the acquisition of wealth and results in spiritual and intellectual mediocrity. The bourgeois loves money; he loves symbols and knows nothing of what they symbolize; his religiosity successfully conceals religion; he cares for what is done rather than for the spirit which prompts it to be done; he is the Scribe and Pharisee of the twentieth century. It was to the bourgeois that Christ said: 'Verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots shall go into the Kingdom of God before you.'

Berdyaev recognises that the bourgeois has had his day. He triumphed in the nineteenth century. Yet man is still measured by the extent of his material possessions, and not until this sub-human criterion fails can our present civilisation give way to another, and that, only if man exists to effect the transition. The second essay, *Man and the Machine*, makes this questionable.

Berdyaev fears that unless man lives consciously as man - *i.e.*, as made in the image of God - he will be annihilated by his latest invention as he has been enslaved by his others. 'Man created culture, states, national units, classes, only to become enslaved by his own creations. Now he is entering upon a new period and aims at conquering the irrational social forces: he establishes an organised

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society and a developed technique, but he again becomes enslaved, this time by the machine into which society and himself are becoming transformed.' If, on the other hand, man remains master of the machine, the machine-age will not only provide a culture on a universal, mass scale, but it will also liberate man from slavery and exploitation, thereby – far from dehumanizing him – it will enable him to lead a fuller, more creative, less mechanical life. Man can achieve this mastery only if he has a profound understanding of himself as man. This, Christianity alone can give him.

The next two essays consist of a concise defence of the Christian religion against present-day charges. Berdyaev points out that the Communist plea that belief in God's activity encourages man's passivity denies the very essence of Christianity – the first of all religions to affirm that man is made in the image of his God. Christianity teaches that man is, by his nature, active, and history shows that the most dynamic development has occurred in Christian countries. But for the dynamic realization by Christians of Christ's principle that all men are of equal value Socialism could never have been. Russians who have been imbued by the spirit of Marxism, who have witnessed the Russian revolution and who have come down on the side of orthodoxy are hard to find. When they are found they repay careful study.

## AT THE PLAY

THERE can be no satisfactory interpretation of *Othello* unless it is realized fully that the Moor is not a jealous man. To produce *Othello* as if the chief character were but a Leontes is to make nonsense, not only of his character, but of Iago's and of the whole background of the play. Othello is apprehensive, he is suspicious, he is credulous, he is ill: but he is not jealous. His tragedy has two roots – his own

generosity, and his complete ignorance of any but a masculine universe. His murder of Desdemona, his wild plot to murder Cassio, are not the actions of a jealous husband, driven mad by the lies about his wife's infidelity; they are the fury of a worshipper who has discovered that his gods have betrayed him.

*Othello* is, in some ways, the play in which Ibsen's dramatic method is most clearly anticipated. Most vital, most important things have occurred before the curtain rises. Some of these are hinted at, others told plainly. Iago has expected a position which is given to another: Iago also professes to believe that Othello has cuckolded him. But what were the relations between Othello and Iago? Was it Iago who first, with a plausibility that always had the seeds of insincerity in it, persuaded the Moor that he was as good as a Venetian? Who introduced him to standards of conduct and courtesy which Othello accepts with dignity, with gratitude, but never quite makes his own? What reason lay behind Othello's refusal to advance Iago to the lieutenantcy? Did he think Cassio the better man for that position? Or did he wish to keep his friend Iago nearer his person, as he would be as his standard-bearer? How had Cassio, a Florentine, become so intimate with Othello that he was used as a messenger to Desdemona? Shakespeare, with that carelessness which is at once our admiration and our despair, leaves us to guess at the answers to these questions. And to enter on that perilous task is one of the chief pleasures in reading or seeing the play.

It is certain from the opening scene between Iago and Roderigo – a scene which bustles us, at a pace almost unprecedented, into the very midst of the plot – that Iago's hatred is not pure hatred. It is love gone sour. Iago can never have been a great lover: and in his fury at Othello there is not only the anger of a

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friend to whom another has been preferred, there is also wounded pride, disappointed ambition and a tormented ingenuity. Perhaps we can go further. No play of Shakespeare's can ever be reduced to a formula, or treated as if it were a tract: but *Othello* has a strong strain of what would later have been called feminism. All the principal male characters live in an exclusively masculine world – a world which has never excluded visits to the brothel for amusement, or to the shrine for worship, but which does exclude intelligent companionship with women. To this world Iago belongs. In this world he has attached himself to Othello. In this world he desires to keep him. There is not only anger at Cassio's advancement in Iago, there is deep jealousy of Desdemona, because he sees in her a woman who will be less than a goddess, and whom only his most careful machinations can continue to present as a whore. Shakespeare does not attack this world. He lets it destroy itself. On his belief in it depend Othello's murder and suicide; Cassio, the pleasantest, most natural man in the play, is yet, by his trust in that world, brought near to disgrace and death; by his reliance on the potency and validity of its standards, and by this alone, Iago is successful in his plotting. Opposite it we have the world of human beauty and honour typified in Desdemona, the world of human sense and coarseness exhibited in Emilia.

Again, if we would understand the story's full meaning, we must inquire into the relations between Iago and his wife. Has he believed the story of her infidelity with Othello? Or is he a neglectful husband who blames his wife for his own indifference, expecting her to have no life away from him except the waiting for him? There is no question about Emilia's infatuation for him, and her acceptance, though she despises them, of the standards of the camp: these standards are neither accepted nor understood by Desdemona

who is genuinely unable to understand how Othello can believe in anything against her – she is always for the truth of character as against the fact of circumstance. Emilia is devoted to her, and yet, the slave of her love for her husband, does not solve the terrible problem by saying, until too late, what has happened to the sacred handkerchief. It is only when she realizes that Iago has used her, misused even his own bad standards to compass Desdemona's downfall that she revolts against him and his world, and with their destruction brings about her own.

If this view of *Othello* be right, it is clear that the interpretations of Iago will be of the first importance, greater even than the interpretation of Othello's character: for Iago is the king-pin of the edifice. In the production of the play at The Old Vic., Maurice Evans' Iago was magnificent. Here was no Richard III: no obvious, self-confessed villain: no sinister, saturnine scoundrel whose very walk would be called in evidence against him. Iago is hearty, hail-fellow well met, a good companion, a favourite at the mess-table and able to exercise towards women the charm which comes so easily to those who despise them. He could exclaim 'The sex, God bless 'em!' or 'The bitches, hell burn 'em!' with equal emphasis and the same meaning. Yet there are Iago's asides, and soliloquies: does he not there betray a self-conscious villainy, a determination to live up to a pattern of self-determined rascality? Partly, no doubt, these are the conventional outbursts of the theatre of the time: the groundlings had to be assured that the man, in spite of smiles and assiduous advice, was always a villain. There is, however, another view of Iago to which Mr. Evans' interpretation gave full force. There is something of the spoiled poet in him, the unfulfilled playwright. After all, he is not quite *in* this masculine world, nor of it. Those who belong to it naturally are not so conscious

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of it as is Iago. When he begins his campaign against his chief and Desdemona by battering on old Brabantio's door, he has not his plans ready-made. As he progresses he becomes possessed by his own skill, fascinated by his power over these other lives, and watches the doom swoop on them with something of the joy of a creative artist. He begins by desiring the disgrace of these two because he is a man seeking revenge. long before the play is over he demands the doom, because he is an artist wishing to perfect his work. Above all, his Iago is the self-sufficient man, the man who believes self-expression to be his sole duty, and does not care what happens to that or those who stand between him and his duty. In two speeches to Roderigo he makes this plain.

Others there are,  
Who trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,  
And throwing but shows of service to their lords,  
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lin'd their coats,  
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;  
And such a one do I profess myself.

That is his statement of his particular creed, as he matches himself against Othello, who is pure service. Later in that first act we have his more general statement:

Virtue? a fig! 't is in ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce; set hyssop, and weed up thyme; supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many; either to have it steril with idleness, or manured with industry: why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.  
Here we have the renaissance itself speak-

ing, the renaissance of Cesare and Cellini, of Raleigh and Marlowe, just as we have another and nobler aspect of it presented in Othello's heart-broken 'Who can control his fate?', while in Desdemona's dying words, the most splendid falsehood in our poetry, we have the spirit of Christendom, when she answers Emilia's 'O, who hath done this deed?' with 'Nobody. I myself: farewell. Commend me to my kind lord. Farewell.'

Othello is as hard a part as any in Shakespeare, and that Abraham Sofaer did not entirely succeed in his interpretation is only to say that he joins the company of all who have essayed the part. He was dignified, if a trifle monotonous, in the early scenes: he had not that overwhelming charm which must have been his, ere he could have persuaded Desdemona to leave her home for his sake. For Othello his love for the girl has been a new dawn. Once he was, as it were, re-made when the Venetian state honoured him with his position of trust; then he was re-made when he was admitted to the gay fellowship of barracks, the gallant comradeship of arms by his Venetian and Florentine friends. He meets Desdemona, and there breaks on him suddenly and at first faintly, another world. Mr. Sofaer's Othello was too fatherly, too condescending: in his speech to the Council there was no loving alteration in tone when he first mentions his wife's name - 'This to hear Would Desdemona seriously incline.' It might have been Portia pleading the Moor's cause, rather than the enraptured husband recounting the miracle of this young love. In the later scenes, when suspicion and his sickness gain hold on him, he ranted rather than raved - a nice distinction, perhaps, but perfectly intelligible to anyone who has studied the famous speeches. Then he was handicapped by his producer, by Mr. Cass's only fault in an otherwise superb production.

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Perhaps the most famous speech in the play is that which begins with the enigmatic line, 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.' With it Othello opens the play's final scene. His duologue with Desdemona, which follows, and the smothering are coincident with the action at the end of the first scene of this act when Iago kills Roderigo and Cassio is helped away. Othello leaves the scene of the assault on Cassio and goes straight to the bedroom, just as Emilia, leaving later, goes and batters on the bedroom door. Now why is Othello's presence at the attack on Cassio always omitted or under-emphasized? Why is he allowed to appear for his assault on Desdemona in a state of judicial calm? He need not rave: but he should arrive, spent, in a condition of extreme tension, seeking to cover his overwhelming emotion with appeals to heaven. He may appear tranced, but it is a hell's trance, the false calm of a man evidently labouring under an intolerable stress. For the audience to understand the scene properly it is essential that his presence at the presumed murder of Cassio should be retained. Particularly important are the words by which he bolsters up his intention to kill Desdemona.

O brave Iago, honest and just,  
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's  
wrong!  
Thou teachest me, – Minion, your dear  
lies dead,  
And your unblest fate hies. – strumpet, I  
come!

It should be a breathless, neurasthenically-controlled Othello who gasps out 'It is the cause'; not a calm, sorrowful judge sentencing a criminal: for in this final scene Othello once more, affected by her innocent presence, talks to his wife; once more he sees that new dawn which broke on him when they first made love; and the dawn dies, blood-red.

The acting in general was on a very

high level. Maurice Evans began rather too quickly. With a fool like Roderigo he would be more himself, not fearing self-betrayal to that interest. and he did not quite convey in the opening scene the depth of the injury done to his pride and his affection. Vivienne Bennett began badly: she was too shy, too clinging, too girlish, and indulged in some awkward meaningless gestures: as the play proceeded, she improved greatly – and her performance in the last two acts was extremely beautiful and moving – she was especially good in her scenes with Emilia, to whom Mary Newcombe gave fire and force, tho' often she was impertinent rather than impudent, pert rather than bold. Emilia's coarseness and bawdiness are out of the *Canterbury Tales*, not out of *The New Yorker*. Leo Genn's Cassio had the right gentlemanly touch; but he hardly suggested the 'great arithmetician' of Iago's contemptuous taunt. Alan Webb's Roderigo, except for a tendency to stray into *Love's Labour's Lost*, was an admirable caricature, while Morland Graham and Cecil Truncer had pathos, poise, dignity and firmness as Brabantio and the Duke.

It is to be hoped that all who thought that the need for the Stage Society was over went to see Eugene O'Neill's *Days without End* at the Grafton Theatre. We have had to wait for a year for a production of one of the most exciting, most dramatic plays by one of the leading dramatists now writing in English: and without the courage and enterprise of this society we might be waiting still. Mr. O'Neill calls his play 'a modern miracle play.' It is the story of the return to the Christian faith of John Loring, brought up as a Catholic, who renounced his religion and cursed his God when his parents, in spite of his prayers, die while he is still a youth. His guardian is a Catholic priest, Father Baird – his mother's brother. With patience, however, and prayer, his uncle has listened to John's desperate efforts to

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find a new focus – socialism, Nietzscheanism, anarchism, Yogi – and waits for his return to Christianity. Moved by a sudden and inexplicable anxiety the priest, who lives far off, comes to New York to see his nephew. Since John's happy marriage to Elsa Baird has not been so disturbed about him: but he has this sudden fear. There is reason for it. While Elsa was away, for the first time since their marriage, John, bored and at a loss, goes to a party. The hosts are old friends, Lucy Hillman and her drunken, faithless husband. At the party Lucy's husband wantonly insults her by going off with his latest mistress for the night: and Lucy, who has borne with numberless infidelities, seduces John in hate and revenge. Since then, John has not known a moment's peace. He is writing a novel – he is a business man whose business is under the depression – which is actually an autobiography, and is to end with his final betrayal of love. He is haunted continually now by that hate-created self which he begot on himself when he first cursed Divine Love. This demon is gradually possessing him, tempting him to an ultimate act of obedience, tempting him somehow to compass Elsa's death and then, by taking his own life, to go back to 'the womb of nothingness.' At this point Baird arrives and precipitates the drama. It ends in the expulsion of the demon – an inevitable end, for John, tho' he has struggled against recognition of the truth, has regained his faith in life and love again when he fell in love with Elsa.

Mr. O'Neill presents the struggle between John and his demon by projecting a figure, masked and like John, who accompanies him wherever he goes. On the whole the device is theatrically effective; but dramatically it suffers from this: the other characters must also have their other selves – and why are they not, too, on the stage? Mr. O'Neill's answer might be that it is only under intense

strain that the other self acquires this damnable and disconcerting solidity – a solidity so real that the other persons, though they cannot see the false John Loring, can hear him and ascribe his bitter speeches, his savage taunts, to their friend.

Considering the great difficulties of the stage at the Grafton, Lewis Casson's production was admirably effective. The masked figure, moving silently, gave one a real sense of invisibility, and seemed more a spirit than a creature of flesh and blood: he was well acted by Neil Porter. Henry Daniel's John was also excellent – tortured, tormented, and often unbearably pathetic – he was a very type of the muddled man of to-day. Harcourt Williams' Father Baird was gracious and kindly, but did not give one quite enough idea of the hidden force which sustained him, of the authority that he could invoke. Iris Baker as Elsa Loring was at first rather colourless, a little weaker than could be justified by her convalescence from influenza; but when she returned from her death-seeking walk in the rain-storm (Elsa learns of John's sin from his novel and from a story of Lucy's) she rose splendidly to the occasion, and gave a magnificent performance. As Lucy Hillman, Diane de Bret could not have been better – she portrayed with genuine fineness the decent, honourable, ill-treated woman under the mask of cynicism and despair. If any London manager has the sense and the courage to put this play on, it should be a greater success than any previous play of Eugene O'Neill's.

It is rather a pity that Mr. Rupert Doone, in his production of *Sweeney Agonistes* at the Group Theatre Rooms on February 9th, decided to set the play in the middle of the room, without a stage. His object was 'to make the part of the audience in the drama active rather than passive,' and if one was sitting at the back, one had to be very active indeed to catch

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a glimpse of what was going on. One could hear, however, and appreciate the skill with which Miss Ruth Wynn Owen and Miss Isobel Scaife spoke the repetitive lines of Dusty and Doris. Wauchope, Horsfall, Klipstein and Krumpacker came in with a naturalistic bustle not quite proper in a group of dummies, but made an excellent chorus. Mr. John Moody was an impressive Sweeney, morose and threatening. A play which has practically no stage directions gives a producer a good deal of licence. Mr. Doone ordains that Sweeney shall follow Doris out of the room with a knife in his hand, raised to strike, and it is a plausible enough conclusion. On the whole, Mr. Doone is to be congratulated on an intelligent and well-drilled production.

### *AT THE PICTURE GALLERIES*

It has been said so often that the exhibition of Art in Industry at Burlington House is bad, and unrepresentative of British industry, that it seems unnecessary to repeat it. It will be better to consider some of the problems involved. What is really meant by art in industry? Clearly it is not the artist in industry, and perhaps wisely so. Few British artists of repute are represented in the exhibition, and such work as there is is not encouraging. Objects such as those designed by Mr. Skeaping are certainly an argument against employing professional sculptors. On the other hand, some designing is obviously demanded. The engineering requirements of cranes and factories may be sufficient to design these much admired types of structure. Functional requirements also virtually design various of the products of British industry which fall within the scope of the exhibition, such as gas cookers and telephones, surgical instruments and glass for scientific research, and these things are almost always beautiful. Again function, economy and

tradition have designed the really common things in England, kitchen chairs, unpatterned tweeds and linens, white and fluted cups and saucers and brown teapots, and these also are beautiful. There has been much criticism of the expense of the objects selected for the exhibition. This is, I think, unreasonable. Things such as those enumerated are cheap and good, but since they are old and need little improvement they were naturally omitted.

The work that does urgently need improvement is the rather more expensive product which apes and deforms the originally poor design of the still more expensive product. The question has therefore to be approached from above; the most expensive objects must first be reformed. And what is it that needs reforming? Surely it is simply ornament; something entirely unfunctional and unnecessary, but a thing for which we seem to have an insatiable craving. What we are seeking is not essential shapes for machine-made objects, these were found long ago, but new and better ways to decorate them.

There is one commercial art which is really creative to-day and produces things which are perfect. And that is the art of designing and making women's clothes. This is partly perhaps because here the contact between the manufacturer and the consumer is particularly close and personal; it is also because there is no humbug about the undesirability of extravagance and fashion. Again it is an art sufficiently sure of itself to borrow freely. We are trying to create a modern ornament that shall be as good and as characteristic as Adam or Regency ornament. Our invention seems to have failed to produce much more than a variety of criss-crosses and a multitude of little fawns – must we really greet our friends at Christmas with the indifferently engraved fawns, decorate our gardens with the stone fawns, hang our walls with the reproduced fawns



## Pictures

which the Burlington House committees seem to think so desirable? If we cannot invent, let us borrow our ornament, and transform it to our taste and material. But let it be recognized that the modern passion for new materials is composed of about the same proportions of love of utility and love of novelty as is a woman's passion for a new hat.

The scope of the Burlington House Exhibition has limits which seem quite arbitrary and inconsistent. It is hard to see why the hand-made jewellery of Miss Katherine Cockerell, good as it is, should have been included when the hand-printed stuffs of Miss Marx and Miss Barron, far the best patterned textiles made in England, are excluded. If lack of design, in the sense of ornament, excludes surgical instruments, why are milk bottles and beakers exhibited? In the spheres chosen, much important work is omitted; for instance, the wallpapers of Mr. Bawden. The printing section is particularly bad. It is characteristic of the spirit of the whole Exhibition that while the work of many good and serious illustrators is not exhibited, or their books are exhibited but are not opened, Mr. John Farleigh's wood-engraved adaptations of early seventeenth century line-engraved portraits, adaptations which seem pointless and perverted, are prominent. The worst section is that of furnishing and interior decoration. But then this is the most difficult province of industrial art, and it is here that the confusion of thought already discussed has the most disastrous effect. To veneer furniture in rare woods is obviously an unnecessary extravagance, yet this furniture is designed on crudely simple lines which are by way of being functional. Many of the objects exhibited are entirely useless, so that the elaborate delusion is pointless. Why not unashamedly suit the extravagant material with an extravagant design? The only interesting piece of furniture was Mrs.

Joel's circular bed. It was not entirely successful perhaps, but it had an idea, that was carried out with verve. Interior decorators are no doubt useful, even if unnecessary; but their influence seems to be singularly pernicious in two respects. They overstress the importance of the modern flat and are consequently preoccupied with economy of space; people are still the same size as Victorians, and to make every piece of furniture a size or two smaller certainly does not solve the problem. Moreover, ampleness is a particularly pleasing quality in furniture, and there seems no good reason why it should be confined to the arms of arm-chairs. The second vice of the interior decorators is their exclusion of modern pictures from modern rooms. The walls of the specimen rooms at Burlington House were decorated with bits of tapestry, slabs of glass, porcelain figures, reproductions of Holbein and Botticelli, but there is not one modern picture. There seems no reason why buying a picture once a year should be less natural than going to the theatre twice a month; the cost need be no more. Is it possible really to understand and enjoy a living art without contributing something to it, or without trying to live with it?

The question of buying pictures is raised by Messrs. Tooth's hire-purchase exhibition. The application of the system to pictures is obviously sound, and its public inauguration is supported by an attractive show. It is a rare pleasure to see a William Roberts painting. His 'Christ driving the Moneychangers from the Temple' stands out in this room full of quiet paintings—Mr. Gilbert Spencer at his intimate best among prams and markets, Mr. Stanley Spencer among fields and sunflowers, and Mr. Matthew Smith, much subdued. It was only paralleled in depth of feeling by Mr. Gertler's weighty pot of flowers.

The Keeper of Prints and Drawings,

## Pictures

in his guide to the present exhibition at the British Museum of works of the last hundred years, begs the public to fill the gaps in the Museum collection through the Contemporary Art Society. The patronage of a society or a museum is, of course, excellent, but it is a cold substitute for that of a personal patron. One hopes that the society will concentrate on buying important pictures beyond the means of the private collector. For completeness the Museum can surely hope for many legacies and presentations. The exhibition is apparently designed to reveal the gaps, and these are certainly startling, though they would have been shown more pointedly and the general interest would have been greatly increased if the arrangement had traced some historical, national, or sentimental development. Certain gaps are immediately apparent; countries such as Sweden, Spain and Belgium are only spasmodically represented, and what is far more important, there is very little German work. The German romantics are at their most sympathetic in their drawings, and a complete exhibition of the period would emphatically include some of the drawings of Feuerbach and his contemporaries to compare with those of Alfred Stevens, Delacroix and late Ingres. The French masters are better represented in the exhibition, but the slender selection is unbalanced and is almost the Museum's entire collection. It seems amazing that the Museum should possess no Cézanne at all, and only an early borrowed lithograph of Picasso. Dufy's 'Sketch at the Funeral of King Albert I,' recently presented by the Contemporary Art Society is, however, an important acquisition. It is an interesting example of French literariness. The hierarchical composition and the summary, but deliberately graded pen drawing correspond with the ecclesiastical ceremony and its symbolism.

The French genius for prints is

perhaps the most striking impression of this exhibition. A medium like lithography, which is usually so depressing, is transformed by Daumier, Chasseriau and Delacroix and by Picasso in 'l'Aveugle' into a vehicle which expresses an enormous range of mental attitude with consistent felicity. The best etchings exhibited are those of Millet and Corot; it is only a pity that they cannot be compared with exciting and important modern developments. Degas' mixed aquatint and etching 'au Louvre: Musée des Antiques,' is a most exquisite creation. The variations of tone and texture in the aquatinting contrasted with the scratchy etched surfaces make a perfect design. Finally, there is *Laboureur*, whose elegance and wit is suggested rather than represented by the print exhibited.

The scope of the exhibition is too wide for all the complicated and interesting tendencies of Victorian art to be illustrated, while most of the more important drawings in the collection were on exhibition last year. It seems a particular pity that the wood-engraved illustrators of the sixties are entirely omitted. Indeed, apart from Ford Madox Brown's beautiful study for 'Take your son, Sir' the most interesting drawings date from the earlier part of the period. Chalon's 'Opera Box' is a charming water-colour essay in three dimensional design that is witty and romantic, and 'The Connoisseurs' is a masterpiece in colour and in careful caricature by Richard Dadd, executed in Bedlam, where he was confined for putting into practice his sympathetic scheme of killing all those who were better dead, beginning with his father.

The modern French classical masters are well represented by two important shows at Agnew's and Wildenstein. The first impression of the Vlaminck show at Messrs. Wildenstein is one of disconcerting realism. His paint seems at times physically transformed into water and snow;

## Music

a particularly unpleasant effect, partly because it is not consistent with the rest of his painting, and partly because this sort of realism, a realism not of translation, but of deception, is naturally unpleasant. The flower pieces are perhaps the best except that in them Vlaminck's permeating stormy atmosphere seems at its most meaningless. Of Renoir's pictures, it is almost impossible to write. One cannot say that Renoir is a painter of this or that aspect of life or beauty; his vision seems to have an entity only in his pictures. He has been called a sensuous painter. The epithet seems just, but when it is said, the essence of his painting is still to be defined. At the Goupil Salon in the French Gallery, Mr. Eric Gill's 'St. Joan' is an example of purely sensuous art. The stomach and thighs are exquisite, carved to a shape that is an acute pleasure; but for all her appealing upward lines, Mr. Gill's figure is a saint without a soul, and Renoir's painting seems spiritual and intellectual compared with it. The pictures at Agnew's come from the collections of the artist's family and are almost all late examples, dating from 1910 to 1919. None are masterpieces, but almost all are good. They have not the balanced perfection of his mature work, but the combination of his curious loose drawing and his strange fiery vision give them a unique pictorial interest.

### *MUSIC IN LONDON*

THE solemn hush which descends upon musical London during Christmas and the New Year has gradually been lifting throughout the past month, and the tradition, that the public at this period is too engrossed in its devotions or its dinners to listen to music, and the musical profession to provide it, whether true or false, has again been honourably observed. The armistice over, the customary bands of skirmishing recitalists, followed by the

heavier legions of L.P.O., L.S.O., and B.B.C. are again occupying their usual positions in the West End. It often remains, however, for the smaller bodies of irregulars, waging a guerrilla warfare from obscure points of vantage, to secure the most direct hits. Of these, one of the most enterprising is to be found at the Mercury Theatre in Ladbroke Grove, under the leadership of Anne Macnaghten and Iris Lemare, where for four or five seasons works by the youngest English composers have been presented to a small but distinguished audience. At their last concert on January 21st four works for flute, oboe and piano by Robin Milford, Christian Darnton, John Locke and Walter Leigh were performed by the group of players known, rather unfortunately, as the 'Sylvan Trio'. This unnecessarily 'olde-worlde' title suggests an atmosphere of nymphs and shepherds oddly at variance with the solid musical worth and sensitive phrasing of Sylvia Spencer, the oboist, of whose first name it is presumably a whimsical corruption. The facile bucolic conception of the ensemble, which expresses itself as 'sylvan,' had unhappily entered the minds of several of the composers as well, and Robin Milford's work was frequently so aggressively amiable as to become drivelling. One should surely not pander exclusively to the obvious rusticity of the oboe and flute at this time of day, when centuries of masterpieces have brought a knowledge of their subtler tonal resources. Christian Darnton, however, is able to sport with Amaryllis in the shade with true dignity and poise, and to him it seemed as though the unusual timbres had taken their rightful share in the evolution of the music, and that he can weave their suggestive qualities into the texture of his work. His concise formal point of view is valuable when dealing with such a combination, where the available resources for development are not large, and where to be discursive is

# Music

probably to be trivial. His music has a definite quality, which one can recognize as personal, and which is the most important consideration. There is nothing unusual, of course, in the union of flute and oboe; but the introduction of the piano immediately produces a different problem. The obvious plan is to reduce the piano to a monochrome background against which to display the more vivid colours of the wind instruments, and like many obvious plans, it is probably a good one; it will not suffice, however, to support one's interest through a whole movement, much less an evening. The second danger lies in that having eschewed this first proceeding, the composer is tempted to make the three instruments do the opposite of what the unsophisticated listener might reasonably expect, and hang his music upon his instrumentation, as it were, upside down. It was of great interest to notice how each composer had steered his way between these hazards, or alternatively, had fouled one or other of them. Walter Leigh's firm writing, with its exceedingly adroit ingenuity, showed up well in this medium.

In the fact that these audiences are, as I have remarked, small but distinguished, lies an implication that may be, and indeed is, levelled as a reproach against this and similar enterprises; to present modern works to a group of specialised enthusiasts, say these critics, is cutting no ice at all, and the concerts become no more nor less than a back-scratching society for young composers. To me, at least, exactly the opposite appears to be the truth. There seems little point in scattering modern works indiscriminately before a heterogeneous public which plainly does not want them, or in trying to bully that public into enjoying itself when it hears them. It is surely much better to start with a nucleus of people whose interest is already aroused, and whose sympathetic consideration is

assured. From such centres a wider interest may well spread that is genuine and dynamic, and may be ultimately much further reaching than the missionary zeal of our more impatient torch-bearers. After all, it is no very outlandish thing for people to gather themselves together in order to gratify any tastes they may have in common, whether for modern music, cock-fighting or more horrid vices, and it is surely a super-self-conscious age which condemns such gatherings out of court as 'precious'. Further, to a composer ploughing his necessarily lonely furrow, the value of an intelligent 'group' to which he can relate himself is inestimable. Though quite disillusioned about the average group-crazy mentality which is so cloying a feature of modern life, I still believe this to be fundamental.

No greater disparity could be imagined than between the frugal meal provided at Ladbroke Grove and the vast contemporary dish served up at the Queen's Hall under the direction of Albert Coates on January 23rd, which consisted in the first English performance of Yuri Shaporin's Symphony in C minor, Op. II. This Soviet composer was born in 1889, where, in spite of revolutions and new creeds, he seems to have steadfastly remained. It is a strange thing that such heavily bourgeois Romanticism should be the expression of one who has avowedly embraced the faith and *régime* of communist Russia, and stranger still when one reads that this symphony is intended to portray the stirring events which brought that *régime* into being. The immense forces employed could do nothing but stress the composer's impotence to rise above the most banal levels; and when a section of the wordless choir, answering another section which had sent up a plaintive cry of 'Maa-aa!' gave vent to a long, low 'Moo-oo!' this impotence somehow seemed to have found a just expression. The thought that the

## Films

Russian Revolution has produced a musical outlook of this deplorable quality is thoroughly disturbing, and one can only hope that Yuri Shaporin is a bulky relic of more fulsome days, whose political and artistic consciousness have not yet fully sorted themselves out.

### ON THE SCREEN

THE most interesting films of the moment appear to be divided into three groups, American, English and Continental, equal in quantity if not in quality.

The two American films, *Strictly Confidential* and *The Painted Veil*, are excellent vehicles for the demonstration of Hollywood's particular qualities, namely, direction and screen acting. America still leads all other film-making countries in these matters. The two English films, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, demonstrate how the direction of English films is progressing. Assuming that the two Continental films, *Maskerade* (German) and *Remous* (French) are typical products of the present-day continental film, they suggest a certain stagnation in the filmcraft of these countries.

*Strictly Confidential* is the story of a young man who is only interested in race-horses and owns a stable of one. Having married into a wealthy family he finds himself in charge of one branch of the family business which holds no interest for him. Circumstances arise which cause him to break away penniless, but taking with him his one possession — a racehorse. Through various amusing and more or less dishonest tricks he manages not only to keep himself and the horse alive, but also to enter it for the American Derby. The race is won in Hollywood's most thrilling manner, but the horse drops dead after passing the winning post. There is a subtlety of direction in this somewhat crude story which gives it a certain quality up to this point; but the end, showing

the ceremonial burial of the horse on the site where it died, and the speeches accompanying the ceremony, are so shattering that one can only suppose that the director died at the same instant as the horse.

*The Painted Veil* is a Greta Garbo picture: can one say anything else about her films? Again she has a story that is badly told and is without any outstanding quality to support her. In spite of the fact that Garbo does not appear to need support, it is a pity that more effort is not made to find subjects for her and to handle them properly. There is one shot alone in this picture which demonstrates Garbo's capabilities as a screen actress. She arrives in China, a bride suddenly plunged into a community of which she knows nothing. The few feet of film in which we see her silent observation of a meeting between her husband and one of his colleagues is in itself proof of Garbo's talent and the value of the silent picture.

Talking of silent pictures brings us to the English picture *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Its chief merits are that it appears to be only about 15 per cent. talkie and that the direction gives it forceful, thick-car suspense which makes it excellent cinema of its kind. The story hardly bears inspection because it has been disregarded in order to explore a very large field; everything that conveys movement has been brought into play, from some of the contents of Hamley's Toy Shop to the Sydney Street raid. An endeavour has also been made to tell a considerable amount of the story in a rather robustly humorous way. As the theme is kidnapping, a rather more quiet type of humour would have been advantageous.

*The Scarlet Pimpernel* is a curiously polished production for such a story. The photography is perhaps the best that has ever been seen in an English film, though the credit for this must be handed to Hollywood, as the camera work was done

# Films

by one of their best men, Hal Rosson. It is generally foolish to attempt to compare a film with its counterpart of play or novel; but here it is difficult not to, perhaps because of its attempt to follow the play closely, but more particularly because of the tremendous popularity of this play with impressionable people. The result is that one finds all the rollicking adventure gone; there is a shine instead of glamour. Leslie Howard seems too intelligent for this kind of part; immaculate cunning takes the place of swash-buckling and a snivelling Chauvelin is replaced by a confident rogue.

The German film *Maskerade* is one which the audiences who go to see it would hate to hear described as a 'smash hit.' A slightly sniggering story about a scandal arising from the escapade of a girl who poses for an artist in a mask and muff is outstanding because of a charming actress. Paula Wessely has a delightful gaiety, a tremendous sincerity, and an

equal capacity for tragedy which makes one look forward to standing in a queue for her next film. Technically, the film has many faults and visually very little beauty.

The French picture, *Remous*, is a triangle story which is not very suitable for the screen. The director has, however, endeavoured to introduce a certain silent technique which makes it interesting if at times a little precious. This film is preceded by *La Joie de Vivre*, a very attractive cartoon in black and white. Though not an entirely successful effort it had moments when one almost felt that something new had been brought to the screen.

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# Life and Letters

March, 1935

## Affairs of Men

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### *IN EUROPE NOW*

THAT Herr Hitler should be hoarse can surprise no one. What lozenge, what gargle, what jujube could he not endow? No longer plain – or pretty – young women whose complexions photographs can neither libel nor reveal, no longer that series of teeth that seem to clamour for the black notes: they have lost their advertising value, at last the testimonial of a man who can shout and verify. It is interesting to know that Herr Hitler was convinced that in conversation with Sir John Simon he would be compelled to strain his voice. Signor Mussolini was pained by this sustained timbre. To be unable to dispense with a whisper is no doubt a weakness.

\* \* \* \*

When Herr Hitler heard about (or read) the White Paper he undoubtedly lost his temper. He sent for Herr von Ribbentrop – his yes-man – in order to lose it more satisfactorily. Reinforced by an audience, he lost his head. The danger of dictators is that they alternately lose their *tête-à-têtes* with themselves, those communions that give to normal men a certain

self-critical sanity. The extreme discourtesy of the communiqué can only be deliberate. Herr Hitler expressed no regrets. No gesture of courtesy engaged – or compromised – the future. One can see the wretched fonctionnaires of the Wilhelm-Strasse trailing behind like bedraggled bridesmaids – the thunderstorm wrecking their happy tulle.

\* \* \*

What is Herr Hitler's object? He has chosen to be rude at the wrong moment. But perhaps from the point of view of 'nuisance value' it is the right moment.

He believes that he can wreck the National Government and split the Labour Party. What troubled confetti!

And behind all that there is the conviction – the concession – that we are honorary Aryans, ultimately despising all Latins and all Slavs.

\* \* \*

We have for the moment – God be praised – been found wanting. The map of Europe is psychologically a curious mess – five great Powers in search of an author.

## Affairs of Men

Monsieur Vienot's brilliant and profound article on the two Russian Alliances (*Europe Nouvelle*, February) should be read by everyone interested in world questions.

England carries her burden of doubt and of conviction. Each individual is entitled to ask himself the question: 'Was it or was it not the right moment to publish the White Paper?'

When is a truth in the bush better than a truth in the hand? There are those of us who believe that the truth has been allowed too long to lurk in the bush. Mr. Macdonald suddenly decided on a Jack-in-the-box.

\* \* \*

There was an old lady of Sheen  
Whose musical ear was not keen:  
She said, 'It is odd  
But I cannot tell God

Save the weasel from Pop goes the  
Queen.'

Herr Furtwängler has refound his  
mislaid spiritual home – the Nazis.

\* \* \*

The situation in Greece is difficult to analyse. There has always been a Venizelist undercurrent rather than a Venizelist party: an undefined urgent unrest pushing the Macedonians, the Cretans and the mountain warriors to action. It is difficult to find the match which lit the fire. Was it the new electoral law? Was it the delayed trial of the men who had attempted to assassinate M. Venizelos? The old feud between Venizelists and Royalists has existed for so many years that the inflammable moment becomes mysterious. It is pathetic that the fleet and the air force of a small country should become striking examples of homeopathy.

M. Venizelos was a great man, though never quite enough of a great man to forget it. He was a brilliant traveller – but travellers learn that even though they sell their goods they lose their roots. To certain men ambition is like wool next to the skin. The mixture of itching and scratching is rarely beneficial.

When power is gained the relief of silk is restored and wisdom may or may not follow.

\* \* \*

The French 'I told you so' is louder than Herr Hitler's official voice. What will be the repercussions of this inevitable – though no doubt regrettable – note?

Those of us who believe it to be just will wish it to be inaudible.

\* \* \*

*Mot de la fin:*

Man (faintly drunk): 'I have lost half a crown.

Policeman: 'Where.'

Man: 'Fifty yards away.'

Policeman: 'Why are you looking for it here?'

Man: 'Because it's lighter here.'

### AT HOME

THE last few weeks have witnessed at home a remarkable revival of political interest. A situation that a short while ago looked set and turgid has all of a sudden become lively and unpredictable. People have begun to sit up and ask each other What next – Cabinet reconstruction, a General Election, another slump, another series of City scandals? And in areas where the effects of economic depression are felt most personally not only eyebrows

## Affairs of Men

but tempers have been raised. The almost inexhaustible patience of the British working man has shown signs of giving out. There have been riots.

\* \* \*

There were a number of reasons for the change. One of them was Pepper – the failure of the attempted ‘corner’ and the financial and political repercussions of the breakdown. Big names were known to have been involved in the gamble and bigger ones still were rumoured to have been. A connexion between the pepper ramp and the tin pool was pretty definitely established. At one moment it looked as though a resounding political scandal were about to be unearthed: there may still be unpleasant disclosures. The whole thing, anyway, left a nasty taste in the mouth and a nasty if temporary slump in British securities. Investors were rattled, the City began to wonder uneasily whether an episode to which the French referred as ‘the English Stavisky case’ was the first of another cycle of Hatry-isms; and generally the affair did no good at all to the tentative economic recovery from which industry was hoping much and politicians more still.

\* \* \*

Pepper was one thing, and at the same moment came others to administer a jolt to complacency. The unemployment figures for January shot suddenly upwards by nearly a quarter of a million – a much more than seasonal increase. Was this further proof that recovery had halted? The rise, disturbing enough in itself, came at a time when both Government and

public had been, made profoundly uncomfortable by the breakdown in the Cabinet’s new plan for unemployment relief. On this matter, as was noted here a month ago, the Government has completely surrendered, but at the time of writing has still produced no alternative scheme. Here, too, rumour has been rife, with tales of dissension in the Cabinet and between it and the Central Relief Committee and the local authorities. All the time that delay and uncertainty are prolonged impatience among the unemployed is growing. The muddle is being electorally exploited for all it is worth by the Oppositions. And all this has come out of a reform which was designed to ‘take the dole out of politics’! Well, it has come back with a vengeance.

\* \* \*

What is more, it will stay back, from now right up to the next election – whenever that may be – and beyond: until, in fact, the problem of unemployment has been solved. It has always been certain that, short of war, the one really decisive element in the fortunes of any contemporary British Government must be the state of unemployment. This is far and away the biggest domestic issue of the times. It has become so more than ever in the past month or two through the re-emergence into active politics of Mr. Lloyd George with his positive schemes for work instead of the dole. He has introduced a potent new factor. Whoever else may try to keep unemployment out of politics, Mr. Lloyd George may be relied upon in the next few months to see that it stays in.

## Affairs of Men

Mr. Lloyd George's re-arrival on the scene has indeed been one of the most operative causes of the new liveliness in politics. It was he and his scheme that nearly forced an immediate Cabinet reconstruction, and would have done if Mr. Garvin in the Press and several influential politicians had had their way. The High Command feigned ignorance of any disturbance, but even *The Times* described a cautious and cumbrous semicircle round the figure of the Wizard and his plans. For the moment Mr. Chamberlain has scored an apparent victory for the orthodox Treasury view and the flirting with Wales has ceased. But Mr. Lloyd George, like the Prime Minister, will go on and on and on, and so, while unemployment remains high and plans for alleviating it unforthcoming, will public demand for some more positive line of action (what the 'Thunderer' calls 'a co-ordinated policy'). Hard on the Chancellor's renewed repudiation of 'public works' came the Premier's letter to Mr. Lloyd George cordially inviting him to submit his plans for inspection. Some think this a plot, some think it has been done to disarm criticism; some do not know what to think. Possibly Mr. Lloyd George doesn't know either, but he has promised to accept the invitation, so soon the fun should begin.

\* \* \*

Prospects of any substantial relief in the Budget have diminished as the financial year draws to a close and the estimates have been published. All three Services are getting more this time. There was a sound case for

some increase this year to replace old or depleted stocks and to make up some arrears already foreshadowed, but the publication of the White Paper justifying the rises on the eve of Sir John Simon's visit to Berlin was a pretty serious miscalculation. We are always twitting the Germans for their bad diplomatic psychology. This time we seem to have been guilty ourselves. What the domestic effect of it has been or will be is impossible to estimate. In the opinion of one experienced political observer it will have added half a million votes to the Peace Ballot.

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An entertaining footnote to Pepper was written by that ruthless political pamphleteer masquerading as humorist Mr. A. P. Herbert, who contributed to *Punch* a poem chronicling the woes of an innocent man of business who attempted to make a fortune by gambling in tapioca. He failed, and his activities passed unnoticed by Authority, but shortly afterwards he was apprehended and fined for being found in possession of a ticket for the Irish Sweep. Point has been lent to this very serious tale by the recent suspension of twelve London police-sergeants and a constable alleged to have been concerned in bribery by street bookmakers in the East End. So long as laws remain bad, we shall be bothered with abuses.

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The Committee of Enquiry into the Coroner system has been appointed. Who shall say it is not needed? Here is a recent flower of coroner's wisdom, culled from the columns of the *News Chronicle*:

## Affairs of Men

The story of two parents, starving and poverty-stricken, who died within three hours of each other after they had done all they could to feed and clothe their four-years-old baby, was told at a Belfast inquest yesterday.

'This tragedy,' said the coroner, 'shows that even among the poorest there may be found a streak of noble humanity and virtue.'

As Stevenson might have said if he had read it, 'Golly, what a man!'

# The Plays of Somerset Maugham

*A Paper read to the Royal Society of Literature on Wednesday, January 9th, 1935, by*

St. John Ervine

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WILLIAM SOMERSET MAUGHAM, who was born in Paris on January 25th, 1874, belongs to a family mainly concerned with the law. His grandfather was a founder of the Incorporated Law Society, and one of his brothers is a distinguished Chancery Judge. Another practised very successfully as a solicitor in France. Law was the natural vocation of the Maughams, but the youngest son of his father did not follow his grandfather or his brothers into the practise of their profession. He chose, instead, to be a physician and surgeon, and studied medicine at St. Thomas's Hospital after he had passed through the University of Heidelberg. His first play was a one-act piece in German, entitled *Schiffbruchig*, which was produced in Berlin in 1901 when its author was twenty-seven; but this was not his first work, for he began his career as a novelist, and not as a dramatist, and he had written four novels before his earliest play was performed. The first of them, *Liza of Lambeth*, was published in 1897, and immediately established him as a man writing with some authority. This is a remarkable novel for anyone to have written, but that it should have been written by a young medical student only just out of his

'teens is astonishing. It is a book that no one but a young doctor with a generous and indignant mind could have written, and it is the young and generous and socially-indignant doctor in Mr. Maugham whose reappearance I still confidently await. It is not my business now to treat of Mr. Maugham's novels, of which he has written over a score, except to say that they reveal the dramatist as effectively as do the plays. He tells a story in a terse and quick and vivid manner. He has views, but he subordinates them to his tale, and he can, when he chooses, indulge himself in a long, stylish piece of dialogue, but he prefers to tell a story without wasting time on opinions or extraneous decoration. He seldom diverges from the main avenue, nor is he distracted by side issues, however amusing they may be. No one who has studied his work can imagine him opening a play with a long irrelevant dialogue on ritualism, such as that with which Mr. Shaw opens *The Apple Cart*, nor can anyone imagine him digressing from his theme to discuss the state of the Irish people in the year A.D. 3000, as Mr. Shaw does so amusingly and at such length in the fourth part of *Back to Methuselah*. Mr. Shaw is, of course, the victim of his opinions, and can easily be diverted

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from his intention by any idea that comes into his head, but Mr. Maugham is a more austere-disciplined man than Mr. Shaw – how can he be otherwise when he has so much law in his blood? – and will not allow himself to be distracted. His people are assembled and their purpose displayed without fuss or delay. The skill with which he deploys his forces makes me call him a great craftsman, and the fact that this skill has been apparent in all his plays and novels, from his first to his latest, entitles him to be called a born storyteller. His success has undoubtedly damaged him in the eyes of those critics who cannot believe that a writer has any merit if the sale of each of his novels exceeds 500 copies, or if his plays are seen by more than seventeen people. Earnest youths from Oxford and Cambridge and the Polytechnic, when they write assessments of modern literature, seldom deign to mention Mr. Maugham. But his place in our literature is secure and high. He is a better dramatist than Congreve, and his comedy, *The Circle*, is superior to *The Way of the World*, a messy piece in which choice speeches are expected to make up for incompetent arrangement and a plot, only remembered at the last moment, which is so involved that even the devoutest admirer of Congreve cannot make head or tail of it. Mr. Maugham's novels are better than his plays, but only because he takes them more seriously. He could, if he would, become the most notable dramatist of his day.

### II

I have committed the offence which he never commits, I have

digressed, or, rather, I have jumped ahead, and I must now come back to my starting-point: the young and generous-minded and socially-indignant doctor who is a house surgeon at St. Thomas's Hospital. The number of doctors who have taken to literature, and taken to it with immense success, is remarkable. In what other profession can a man acquire a greater knowledge of diversified human nature than he can obtain in medicine? In the law, perhaps, although I doubt that; but, in any event, Mr. Maugham, by choosing to belong to a family of lawyers and becoming a doctor, ensured himself a variety of experience and knowledge, personal and derived, that was invaluable to him as a dramatist and a novelist. It will be well at this point to say that he abandoned medicine. Medicine did not abandon him. He is a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, and during the War he returned to the practice of medicine in the Army. But medicine was not to keep him, and, as we have seen, he was producing novels while he was still dispensing potions, and preparing to make a dramatist of himself between visits to patients. His first appearance on the English stage was in the nature of a misfortune. The play was a sombre piece, entitled *A Man of Honour*, and it was produced by the Stage Society in 1903. The facts that it was sombre and that it was performed by the Stage Society were Mr. Maugham's undoing. Our managers suspect serious authors, especially when they are noticed by the Stage Society, of being no better than they

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ought to be, and take uncommon care to reject their plays without reading them. Managers, more than other people, love labels, and anyone who wishes to obtain admission to the stage must be careful how he gets himself labelled. If he begins his career by writing a play which can be called gloomy, then the sooner he enters the Civil Service the better it will be for his pocket and his peace of mind. Mr. Maugham made this terrible mistake: he wrote a gloomy play, and was immediately labelled an intellectual dramatist. His typescripts were returned to him with unflattering rapidity. *A Man of Honour*, which was written in 1898, when its author was twenty-four, was refused by half a dozen managers, and it might have been better for Mr. Maugham if it had also been refused by the Stage Society. 'I could not help noticing,' he says in one of his prefaces, 'that a play produced by the Stage Society did not lead to very much. After the two performances they gave it and the notices in the Press, it was as dead as mutton. I felt a trifle flat after the production of *A Man of Honour*. I looked reflectively at the Thames and was conscious that I had not set it on fire. I badly wanted to write plays that would be seen not only by a handful of people. I wanted money and I wanted fame. I did not know then that success on the stage can only bring notoriety. But it was not without misgivings that I turned to comedy. I knew that the drama could only regain its proper place in the literary life of the time and be of serious import to intelligent men if it dealt in a sincere spirit with life. . . .

Stifling, then, my honourable scruples I sat down and wrote a comedy which I called *Loaves and Fishes*. The chief character was the fashionable vicar of a London parish. It was refused by every manager to whom it was sent on the ground that the public would not care to see the cloth held up to ridicule,' a strange ground for rejection when one remembers how avidly the public read the novels of Anthony Trollope, how popular was *The Private Secretary*. The young author, who had already written and published five novels, felt despondent about his chances of becoming a dramatist, and his despair was increased when, walking with Mr. Max Beerbohm on the pleasant lawns of Merton Abbey, he heard himself advised by that elegant author to give up all hope of theatrical success. Ibsen, too, but more abruptly, was told to leave the stage. The leading dramatic critic of Copenhagen, who is now, no doubt, repenting of his folly in hell, harshly recommended the young Norwegian, as the young Keats had been urged, to return to his apothecary's shop and devote to pills and plasters the talent he was so wantonly devoting to the drama. William Archer once publicly besought Mr. Bernard Shaw to withdraw from the theatre, for which, Archer asserted, he had obviously no talent whatever! But Mr. Maugham was not to be daunted by Mr. Max Beerbohm any more than Keats was to be killed by the *Quarterly* or Ibsen to be returned to his apothecary's shop or Mr. Shaw to be kept on platforms. *Loaves and Fishes* having failed to find a producer, Mr. Maugham immediately wrote what he fondly imagined to be a light



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comedy which would irresistibly attract a popular actress. He has always shown a remarkable indifference to the requirements of managers and players, and the light comedy which followed *Loaves and Fishes* flouted all the popular stage conventions and invited the refusals it promptly received. For it included a scene in which the leading actress had to show herself to the public in the utmost disarray, 'with no make-up on, and have her hair done while she arranged her face before the audience.' It is hard to blame the actresses who declined to look at the play. Manager after manager refused it. If this was the reward of a man who tried to write popular light comedies, Mr. Maugham might as well have earned the label of a gloomy dramatist and have continued to produce sour-minded pieces. But he was resolved to write a pleasant little play, and so, while *Loaves and Fishes* and *Lady Frederick* continued to be rejected, he wrote *Mrs. Dot*, as nearly as he could in what he believed to be the fashionable formula. 'It was,' he says, 'refused as uniformly as *Lady Frederick* had been. The managers praised the dialogue, but complained that there was not enough action, and one of them suggested that I should put in a burglary. I did not see my way to this.' He was now beginning to be daunted, and although he set about the writing of another light comedy, *Jack Straw*, he felt sufficiently despondent to remark to Mr. Harley Granville-Barker, as they strolled one morning through St. James's Park, that it seemed useless for him to try any longer to win a place in the theatre. He had almost abandoned hope and

was inclined to put his trust exclusively in novels! . . . A few weeks later, three of these plays, which had been rejected many times, together with a fourth piece, called *The Explorer*, were being acted simultaneously with great success in the West End, a record which has not been broken, and their author, who had with the utmost difficulty raised the price of the fare from Italy to England to attend the rehearsals of *Lady Frederick*, found himself a rich man, eagerly sought after by managers and actors. The first of the oft-rejected pieces, *Lady Frederick*, was performed 422 times; the second, *Mrs. Dot*, 272 times; and the third, *Jack Straw*, 321 times. The fourth play, *The Explorer*, a sterner piece than these three, was less successful. Mr. Maugham is now the author of twenty-eight plays, of which only eighteen are included in the Collected Edition, these eighteen, he too modestly says, being all that he wishes to preserve. His latest play, *Sheppey*, he declares, is the last that he will write in his capacity as a 'professional dramatist.' This announcement is worded in a way which does not preclude the hope that Mr. Maugham may write many plays for his own entertainment or for experimental purposes. In the preface to the fifth volume, he discusses the possibility of finding new methods of expression in drama, new ways of writing dialogue, and this discussion inspires the belief that he may surprise and gratify his admirers with the production of plays of greater quality than any he has yet written. His excuse for abandoning the theatre does not stand examination. 'I am conscious,' he says, 'that I am no longer in touch with the public that

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patronises the theatre.' He, therefore, steps on to the shelf, as a dramatist, although he refuses to mount it as a novelist. Amazed at this decision of a man who was only sixty when he made it, his admirers reminded him that many great authors, from Æschylus to Mr. Shaw, produced great works, sometimes their greatest, after they had become septuagenarians. Æschylus produced his finest extant work, the *Orestes Trilogy*, when he was sixty-seven. Sophocles produced the *Philoctetes*, when he was eighty-seven. About eight of the extant plays out of the ninety-two Euripides is alleged to have written were produced after he was sixty, and these are among the best of his works, and include the two plays on *Iphigenia*. Mr. Shaw, who is now seventy-eight and still writing, has written about a dozen plays since his sixtieth birthday, including *Heartbreak House*, which is sometimes said to be his best work; *Saint Joan*, which is his most popular play; and *Back to Methuselah*, which is really five plays pretending to be one. We have every right, therefore, to refuse to accept Mr. Maugham's resignation as a dramatist, professional or otherwise.

## III

His plays can, I think, be placed in three clearly-marked groups. The first group contains the light comedies, such as *Lady Frederick*, in which Mr. Maugham himself scarcely obtrudes a thought. I shall not, I hope, be regarded as saying that these comedies are thoughtless because I say that. I mean only that the first group of plays consists of pieces in which the

author is content to tell a story without adding any views or opinions of his own to it. The feat may seem impossible, since the very way in which an author tells a story may be said to be an expression of his views or opinions, but there are no didactics in these early and exceptionally well-made plays, no argument, no disquisition. The difference between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet* is not greater than the difference between *Jack Straw* and *Sheppey*. Experience of life has not yet tinged Mr. Maugham's mind with his individual colour; he is content in this first group of plays to be an entertainer, and he offers no comment or remarks of his own. The second group, in which the cynicism commonly attributed to him reveals itself, is mainly concerned with the question of marriage. It includes plays so dissimilar as *Cæsar's Wife*, *The Circle*, and *The Constant Wife*. Some of the cynicism which was oppressive in these plays in performance has been pruned from them in the Collected Edition. A few lines in *The Constant Wife*, in which a character expresses the belief that there are no happy marriages in the sense of continuous love throughout life, have been removed. But there remains enough cynicism in this group to discompose the average English playgoer, to whom cynicism is as distasteful as satire. The third group is the latest, and contains plays of deepening bitterness, such as his morality play, *For Services Rendered*, and also one other play, his last to be produced, though we hope it will not be the last he will write, the piece called *Sheppey*. In this play Mr. Maugham gives us a glimpse of that

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generous-minded and socially-indignant doctor who will, I believe, surprise and delight us with a noble play if Mr. Maugham will allow him to assert himself.

The story of *Lady Frederick* is a familiar one, in spite of the freshness of its treatment, and variations of it are to be found in *David Garrick* and in a short play by Sir James Barrie, called *Rosalind*. In each of these plays a middle-aged person, a woman or a man, is ardently loved by a youth or a girl, and the dramatist shows the disillusionment of the young lover as a result of the deliberate act of the beloved. In *David Garrick*, the great actor repels the alderman's daughter by pretending to be drunk and displaying excessive rudeness to her father's guests. In *Rosalind*, an actress allows a young admirer to see her without her stage array, wearing spectacles and an old wrapper. In *Lady Frederick*, a frayed and impecunious lady of title, magnanimously disillusions her young and wealthy lover by letting him enter her dressing-room and see her without cosmetics or curls. In this play Mr. Maugham repeats an infallible trick of the theatre, one that was performed, for example, by Sir Arthur Pinero in *His House in Order*. He makes Lady Frederick, who has been grossly insulted by the Marchioness of Mereston, the young man's mother, and is in desperate need of money, forego a great advantage over that lady. Letters have come into her possession which prove that the late Marquess, a man of public piety, maintained a mistress at the same time that he maintained his wife. Lady Frederick burns the

letters so that the knowledge is forever withheld from Lady Mereston, and she suffers her enemy's insults even as she is burning them. An act of magnanimity never fails to stir enthusiasm in an audience, and Mr. Maugham uses it with as much skill as it was used by Pinero.

*Lady Frederick* is written in the Congreve - Sheridan - Wilde manner. All the characters, even if they are servants, speak in epigrams. It is a traditional English Comedy of manners. Mr. Maugham, indeed, with cynical frankness says that when the play was bought by Mr. George Taylor for production in America, he was requested by that gentleman to let him have some more epigrams. 'I went away and in two hours wrote twenty-four.' It is not generally known that Wilde, by fitting the duchesses in his comedies with epigrammatic minds, contributed to the decline of the privileged class in this country. Duchesses in the 'nineties led lives of misery because Wilde had accustomed the public to believe that words of wit and even of wisdom incessantly fell from their lips, and a number of these unhappy women, almost distracted by their ambition to live up to their reputation, hired impoverished and unscrupulous journalists to supply them with a dozen assorted epigrams every day during the London season! The result of this subterfuge was that duchesses began to talk like leading articles, and have never since been able to hold up their heads.

In *Lady Frederick* it is evident that the author's experience of life is still small, and that his indignation exceeds his wisdom. He hates hypocrisy and

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snobbery, and is passionately on the side of the rebels. He does not yet know that conventional and orthodox people have a case, and is inclined to believe that good nature is an excellent substitute for unrightness. He persuades us to like Lady Frederick, and overlooks the fact that she is a thoroughly bad hat. One does not feel in this play the hand of the master who has sampled life in many forms and has come to a conclusion about it, but one does feel the firm hand of a very accomplished craftsman. Mr. Maugham's plays are all exceedingly well constructed. This comedy, *Lady Frederick*, almost acts itself, it is so well built.

## IV

I shall not refer to the other plays in this early group, since they have the same characteristics as *Lady Frederick*. Each of them is a model of fine skill, and each of them is – good entertainment, even if the people in them seldom seem to be worth the trouble their author takes to show them as they are. Mr. Maugham would, I do not doubt, disapprove of that statement, and, up to a point, I should acknowledge his right to disapprove of it. The fact that people exist is, perhaps, excuse enough for writing about them. 'If way to the better there be,' said Thomas Hardy, 'it exacts a full look at the worst,' and great authors have passionately insisted on their right to express themselves through any sort of person, as, indeed, the Almighty Himself has done. There are patriarchs in the Old Testament whom I would not care to have in my house. Abraham was a very obnoxious and

cowardly old man, who did not hesitate on one occasion to palm off his wife, Sarah, as his sister, lest her beauty should enchant, as indeed it did, Abimelech, the King of Gerar, a very decent man who succeeded by a logical argument in convincing God that the divine intention to destroy him for attempting to possess Sarah was exceedingly unjust. I have never cared much for Samuel, and I find episodes in the life of Moses which a Plymouth Brother would have difficulty in excusing. All creators insist on their right to use any material that comes their way. Mr. Maugham is, therefore, entitled to say that the characters in these and his later plays are as capable as finer people of serving his purpose. But there is, surely, a danger of making a lop-sided world when we express our feelings about it only through paltry or ignominious people? Eastern people, according to Dr. Ranjee G. Shahani, find fault with Shakespeare because 'there is no saint or martyr in' his world. It was 'the spectacle, not the meaning, of life' which interested him. Dr. Shahani is not quite accurate in saying there is no saint or martyr in Shakespeare's world. There is one, Joan of Arc, but we know to our shame how he treated her. It is an appalling thought that our poet took the mob's estimate of the Maid as a strumpet who was bearing a bastard, or, at all events, pretended that she was, to whom she scarcely knew; but dare we suppose that if a Maid were to lead victorious troops against us to-day, we should be chivalrous enough to refrain from accusing her of spending orgiastic nights with her generals? What would

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be thought by elderly ladies and gentlemen in Cheltenham and Bath, to say nothing of Tunbridge Wells, if an announcer were to broadcast the news that an enemy girl of eighteen slept every night in the open fields, lying side by side with rough and ribald and licentious soldiers? . . . If I feel depressed because Shakespeare could think the worst of such a girl, I am uplifted by the thought that Mr. Maugham would give her the benefit of the doubt and would probably think no harm of her. And that fact, Mr. Maugham might well insist, is sufficient excuse for his habit, in the majority of his plays, of interesting himself in ignominious men and women. A man may acquire charity by contemplating people of little quality, even if he runs the risk of giving himself airs of superiority or becoming a prig. It is, nevertheless, a pity for an author to restrict himself to charitable contemplation of insignificant people, as Mr. Maugham, in spite of his reputation for bitterness and cynicism, may be said to do.

### V

The second group of plays, in spite of its brilliance, is not one on which I propose to dilate. It is entirely concerned with marital relations, and suffers from the confusion of thought which is evident when a problem is too narrowly examined. Mr. Maugham appears to be distressed by the fact that marriages are sometimes unhappy, and in his distress he ignores the fact that happy marriages are commoner. If they were not, the institution of marriage would long ago have been

dissolved, and mankind would have found some other method of gratifying its desires for perpetuation. The most that Mr. Maugham is willing to allow in this group of plays is that people agree to make the best of a bad job. They settle down in a state of suspended antipathy or they develop a tolerant affection for each other. There is not, except in *Sheppey*, a single happy or even affectionate marriage in the whole of the Maugham plays. There is a hint of happiness in *Smith* and *The Land of Promise*, but in the first of these plays the marriage is only arranged – it has not taken place when the comedy ends – and in the second, it has only begun. The inquisitive student of the Maugham drama will notice that in both these plays the marriage is one of unequals. In *Smith*, a very dexterously-written play, Tom Freeman, who has taken to farming in Rhodesia, returns to England to find a wife. He frankly admits that he is looking for a capable woman who will look after his house, cook his meals, keep his clothes in repair, and, in her spare time, bear any children he wants. After a brief contact with the women of his sister's circle, he decides that the upper middle-class is hopeless, and he proposes to her parlourmaid, a tranquil and vigorous girl who seems likely to satisfy all his requirements. This girl is one of the finest figures in the Maugham gallery of characters, and is the model, one may suppose, for Sheppey's wife. In *The Land of Promise*, Norah Marsh, a companion to an elderly and exceedingly unpleasant old lady at Tunbridge Wells, agrees to marry a Canadian roughneck, Frank Taylor, to escape from the nagging of

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her working-class sister-in-law. Norah, who had been promised a large bequest by her employer as a reward for refusing a young doctor and devoting herself to the unscrupulous old woman, emigrates to Canada when she finds that the bequest has not been made. In Canada, living on a farm, her ladylike incompetence is instantly revealed, and the unfortunate girl learns that her small accomplishments, such as 'doing the flowers' and taking the little dog for a walk and reading the less exacting parts of the *Morning Post* to her tiresome and mean-minded old lady, have no worth in Manitoba.

Apart from the felicity of Sheppey's marriage, and the hints in *Smith* and *The Land of Promise* that affection may develop, there is no happiness in the Maugham marriages. *Cesar's Wife*, where the unequals are a man of forty-five and a girl of twenty, ends with what may be called a reconciliation, but the reconciliation is seen only at the beginning. We are not told how it continued. Mr. Maugham, apparently, has not noticed that the majority of marriages are affectionate and that the history of marriage is illuminated by numerous instances of great love and devotion that have lasted for life, nor has he noticed the singular felicity which attends the marriage of people who share the same enthusiasm or are engaged in the same work. Such dissimilar couples as William and Catherine Booth, Pierre and Marie Curie, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and Charlotte and Bernard Shaw, prove that Mr. Maugham's point of view falls far short of a complete statement of fact.

It is fair to say, however, that there

is a love scene in *The Circle* which is charming enough to be called beautiful. When Elizabeth says to Teddie, with whom she proposes to elope, 'I am giving up all my hope of happiness,' Teddie replies:

'But I wasn't offering you happiness. I don't think my sort of love tends to happiness. I'm jealous. I'm not a very easy man to get on with. I'm often out of temper and irritable. I should be fed to teeth with you sometimes, and so would you be with me. I daresay we'd fight like cat and dog, and sometimes we'd hate each other. Often you'd be wretched and bored stiff and lonely, and often you'd be frightfully homesick, and then you'd regret all you'd lost. Stupid women would be rude to you because we'd run away together. And some of them would cut you. I don't offer you peace and quietness. I offer you unrest and anxiety. I don't offer you happiness. I offer you love.'

To which Elizabeth replies, 'You hateful creature, I absolutely adore you,' and off he and she go together. The speech reminds us of Garibaldi recruiting his Thousand or William Booth enlisting his soldiers. 'I offer you wounds and death,' said Garibaldi. When he was asked what their wages would be, Booth told his officers, 'Brick ends, rotten eggs, fish and the like.' Garibaldi got his Thousand, and Booth got his soldiers.

But if the point of view is faulty, the plays, so far as the construction is concerned, are not. Mr. Maugham's skill appears at its best in *Smith*, where he manages a difficult situation with exceptional dexterity. He has to con-

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trive meetings between a parlour-maid and a guest in the house where she is employed in such a manner that the audience never even wonders how these two came to know each other well enough to fall in love. The play is divided into four acts instead of three, the number employed in all its predecessors, and this division, in itself, is a sign of the sureness of Mr. Maugham's craftsmanship. He knows exactly when to change the lay-out of a play. Mr. Maugham regards the second act of *The Land of Promise* as 'very good,' and it is, but the third act of *Smith* is technically perfect. It is masterly because it is not mechanical. The devices appear in a natural order. Each incident grows out of its predecessor. The arrangement is not that of a series of cogs neatly fitting together, but of a flow of events that inevitably follow each other. *This* happens because *that* happened, and as the events occur and pass, the nature of the characters appears and develops. In a scene of singular brevity and effectiveness, the sensibility of Smith is made manifest, the quality that Freeman desires in his mate is plainly revealed. This scene is swiftly followed by three scenes, one in which Freeman is deeply disillusioned by his shallow sister, one in which the middle-class woman he had thought of marrying shows him very clearly that his life and hers cannot meet and mingle, and she suggests to him that he should marry Smith, and one in which he proves, simply and naturally, to Smith that he is the sort of man she likes and admires.

Mr. Maugham occasionally, but only occasionally, sacrifices veracity to theatrical effect. He makes this sacri-

fice in *Our Betters*, which, in spite of its unpleasantness and, I venture to believe, its untruth, enjoyed great popularity. It is difficult to believe that the young American girl, Bessie, on finding her sister in a very compromising situation, would immediately rush into the drawing-room, communicate her knowledge to all the guests, and burst into floods of tears. The modern American girl is not demure enough to drop a tear or show the slightest surprise at what Bessie saw in the Japanese tea-house. If Bessie's behaviour is doubtful, her sister's is still more doubtful. It is almost impossible to believe that Pearl, on returning to the drawing-room with the gigolo, and learning that her conduct in the tea-house has been discovered by Bessie and disclosed to the guests, would turn to the gigolo and say, 'You damned fool, I told you it was too risky!' The unreality of this scene was plainer when it was acted in London than it is in the printed play, for the end was altered at the request of the Lord Chamberlain, who proposed that the discovery in the tea-house should be made by the young man who wished to marry Bessie, and not by Bessie. Why the Lord Chamberlain should have supposed that this alteration would render the discovery innocuous is not easy to understand, but it certainly made the situation less plausible; for who can suppose that any young man, in such circumstances, would come blurting out the facts to a drawing-room full of comparative strangers or even to intimate friends? The young man would, surely, have glossed over the curious sight he had witnessed, although, of course, in doing so he would have ruined a good curtain

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and might even have injured the last act. *Our Betters* swings on an improbability, and when a play does that, it is a bad play.

### VI

When we turn to the third group of plays, we find the most definite signs of the Maugham we are seeking. They are intensely bitter in their tone, and the bitterness is often wilful, but they reveal a concern about depths of life that is absent from the other groups. The first of the group is *The Unknown*, which was produced immediately after the War. In this play, Mr. Maugham treats a soldier's loss of religious faith as a result of his experiences in the trenches. The play has the dramatic effects we expect to find in his work, but the loss of faith is less impressive than it ought to be, chiefly because it does not appear to have any basis in the mind, but to be entirely due to an emotional process. There are pious people who say that they believe in the existence of God because they have seen a beautiful sunset. They might as well assert a disbelief in His existence because of a wet or foggy day or a gale at sea. The existence of God does not depend on meteorological conditions. The fact that the War occurred is not a proof that there is no God, or that He is unjust, but it was the fact of the War which shattered such faith as John Wharton possessed. That does not appear to have amounted to much. He was a routine Christian, adhering to the Church of England because he had been brought up in it and because it was the church of people of his class. He had not that profound piety which

enables a man to retain his faith in all adversity. But although the play does not deal with the religion of a man of the character of Job or Jeremiah, it does deal very justly with the religion of a man of the upbringing and education and intelligence of John Wharton, and Mr. Maugham indisputably shows the disintegrating effect which the War had on the religious beliefs of many people whose profession of faith was entirely routine. There is a scene in this play which excites some scepticism. Wharton has been engaged for a long time to Sylvia Bullough, the sort of dully-pious young woman who infests English villages and makes ministers of religion doubt the beneficence of God. Sylvia breaks off her engagement on hearing of John's defection from his faith, a breach which, in the circumstances, is not easy to credit. A religious woman would have realized in what distress of mind John's loss had been incurred, and although she might have been daunted by St. Paul's injunction in the second epistle to the Corinthians that she should not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, she might have heartened herself with his statement in the first epistle that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. It is possible, of course, that the second epistle would have prevailed over the first in Sylvia's mind, for she was a poor creature with a passion for uncomfortable piety. We remember, too, that Christina Rossetti refused to marry an unbeliever whom she deeply loved, but her refusal was made in different circumstances from those which attended Sylvia Bullough's. The incident which excites doubt occurs in the third act, when



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Sylvia, for reasons which pass all understanding and make her appear to suffer from mental obliquity, conceals the fact of his father's death from John and begs him to go to Communion because his refusal to take the Sacrament is tormenting the dying man. 'If you received the Communion, John, it would give your father peace.' And John, after some argument, goes to the Communion-rails and takes the Sacrament in spite of his apostasy. The discovery of this trick, incredible as it is stupid, abolishes John's love for Sylvia, but the play, by this time, has fallen to pieces and we do not care what becomes of her and are less interested than we were in John. It is, nevertheless, a remarkable work, one, too, which enables us to learn something of the faith that fills its author; for the speech uttered by Dr. Macfarlane in the last act may be regarded as representative of Dr. Maugham's. 'I don't believe that God is all-powerful and all-knowing,' says Dr. Macfarlane, who might almost be repeating the creed of Mr. Shaw. 'But I think He struggles against evil as we do. I don't believe He means to chasten us by suffering or to purify us by pain. I believe pain and suffering are evil, and that He hates them, and would crush them if He could. And I believe that in this age-long struggle between God and evil, we can help, all of us, even the meanest; for in some way, I don't know how, I believe that all our goodness adds to the strength of God, and perhaps – who can tell? – will give Him such power that at last He will be able utterly to destroy evil – utterly, with its pain and suffering. When we're good, we're buying silver bullets for the King

of Heaven, and when we're bad, well, we're trading with the enemy.'

This profession of faith is far from satisfying. A limited God makes a limited appeal, and we are bound to believe that if God is limited, then there must be some force behind Him which is unlimited even if we have not the faintest idea of its purpose. But the fact that so grave a play as this could be produced in 1920 gives us cause to feel a greater respect for our theatre than we are sometimes ready to give it. The second significant play in this group is the morality, *For Services Rendered*, a play profoundly moving even when it fails to convince the spectator that it is a fair presentation of fact. Mr. Maugham overloads the Ardsley family with calamity. No single group of people ever were so overwhelmed by disaster as this family is, or if there ever were a family so generally distressed, the fault, we feel, was in its members and not in their stars. Very wilfully Mr. Maugham attributes to the environment of the Ardsleys what ought, if it be credible at all, to be attributed to their own nature, although, perhaps, one might say that one's nature is part of one's environment. If, however, there is any such thing as freewill, if men, as Macbeth says, still have judgment here, we are entitled to say that these Ardsleys had only themselves to blame for their misfortunes, and if there is no such thing as freewill, then what is the use of calling attention to what cannot be helped? Mr. Maugham is not content to portray the Ardsleys as suffering and invertebrate people, but increases their company by neighbours who suffer and are as inverte-

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brate as themselves. One almost imagines that the Ardsleys spread an infection of inertia among their acquaintances and friends. There is not a happy or successful person among them, with the exception, perhaps, of Mrs. Ardsley's brother, a doctor, of whom, however, we know so little that he may be suffering from more complaints than all the others put together. One feels repelled when, in the last act, Mr. Maugham announces Mrs. Ardsley's impending death from cancer. The accumulation of catastrophe and disaster is too much, a wilful act on the author's part, as if he were determined to screw the last ounce of agony out of his characters and his audience. Mr. Maugham might reply to his critics that what is sauce for him ought to be sauce for Shakespeare. Why should the Elizabethan be allowed to pile calamity in *Hamlet*, to the extent of strewing the stage with dead bodies in the last act, when the Georgian is denied the right to rather fewer calamities? Mr. Maugham, in making Eva Ardsley dress up in finery, after she has lost her wits, and causing her to sing a snatch of song, is surely only repeating Shakespeare's behaviour to Ophelia? There is a difference, and it counts to Mr. Maugham's disadvantage. The disasters in *Hamlet* are not wilfully brought about by the author. The disasters in *For Services Rendered* are. Mr. Maugham's people are not, as Shakespeare's are, caught in a net of circumstances: they are thrust into the net by their creator, who gives them inert natures and deprives them of all hope of escape. Shakespeare's people clench their fists: Mr. Maug-

ham's, like John Galsworthy's, put up their hands. There is a character in this play, Sydney Ardsley, who has been blinded as a result of wounds sustained in the War. Our instinct to pity the blind does not prevent us from realising that Sydney is a disagreeable and inert and even cruel man, who wantonly wounds his sister, although she has sacrificed herself for him. He lies down under his disability and becomes a Blind Fury who has lost all charity, if he ever had any, all love and kindly feeling for everybody and everything. His father remarks that he had hoped that Sydney would become a solicitor and succeed to his practice, but, of course, his blindness had killed that hope. Why? one wonders. At the opening of the play, he is forty years of age. It is probable, therefore, that he had had some experience as an articled clerk in his father's office before the outbreak of the War. He may have qualified as a solicitor. Is there any cause to prevent him from resuming the practice of the law? His blindness? But blind men, with less experience of sight than Sydney, have overcome their affliction. Henry Fawcett lost his sight at the age of twenty-five, but he became a notable economist, occupying the Chair of Political Economy at Cambridge, and was made Postmaster-General by Mr. Gladstone and proved himself to be a most capable head of a department. Another blind man, and one apter to this occasion than Fawcett, was the late Sir Washington Ranger, who lost his sight when he was fourteen, and, therefore, had far less visual experience than either Fawcett or Sydney Ardsley, but became one of

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the leading lawyers in the City of London. Have we not heard of Miss Helen Keller who, though blind and deaf and dumb almost from infancy, has overcome her darkened eyes and silent tongue and unrecording ears? Sydney Ardsley does nothing, nor does he try to do anything, and the spectator, even if his heart be sympathetic, feels assured that this man would have been just as flabby with his sight as he was without it. A similar feeling pervades the spectator in connection with the axed naval officer, Collie Stratton, who commits suicide because he is in danger of arrest for uttering stumer cheques. I well remember the scorn with which a captain in the Navy said of Stratton, 'He was the sort of man who would always have been running his ship aground!' It is the sensation the spectator has that the people in *For Services Rendered* are backboneless that makes it a little repellent, but, in spite of the sensation, the play is, indisputably, a moving and sincere tragedy, with moments of great beauty. The scene in which Eva Ardsley asks Collie Stratton to marry her is full of fine feeling.

### VII

Mr. Maugham is at his best and finest in *Sheppey*. Here, again, he is troubled by religion. Is there never to be any compatibility between faith and practice? Must men always and for ever fall below their own standards and betray their ideals? The good-natured barber who wins £8,500 in the Irish Sweepstake is suddenly stricken down, as Saul was on his way to

Damascus, and rises up a changed man. All his little plans for a comfortable life are abandoned. He reads St. Luke's account of the young man with great possessions who came to Jesus and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. The fact that Mr. Maugham chooses the version of this story given by St. Luke is significant, for St. Luke, like Mr. Maugham, was a physician, and he was notable among the Synoptists for his style. The injunction given to the rich young man, 'Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' is accepted by Sheppey as an injunction to himself. 'It was,' he says, 'like a great white light, I saw my way plain before me. I'm going to give this money of mine to them as needs it more than I do.' This proposal to take the Christian religion seriously distresses his family, especially his dreadful daughter and her more dreadful young man, and causes them to think that he is out of his mind. Jesus Himself had a similar experience when He returned to his own country and was uncivilly received by His friends, who said that He was beside Himself. The vision which St. Paul saw, while he was still Saul, is said by Schweitzer, a saintly doctor, to have been the result of an epileptiform seizure, and it appears from the medical testimony that Sheppey, too, suffers from a disease of the mind which amounts to acute mania. The doctors are ready to certify him so that he may be confined to an asylum. It is here that I find Mr. Maugham in fault. If Sheppey is mad, then the play has no meaning, and Sheppey's

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daughter and her young man are entirely justified in their attitude towards him. And, apparently, Sheppey is mad. Mr. Maugham, in the preface to the play, refers to the interview between Sheppey and Death as 'an hallucination of Sheppey's disordered mind.' I do not know what he means by 'disordered.' Any person of original ideas appears 'disordered,' if not actually insane, to people of routine ideas. Mr. Maugham may mean that Sheppey is only 'disordered' in the sense of being unusual or of being a Christian, but I am afraid he, too, shares Dr. Ennismore's belief that the barber is suffering from acute mania. How, then, can we be expected to take a serious interest in his point of view? This would have been a far different play had Mr. Maugham assumed, as he might very reasonably have done, that Sheppey was saner than his doctor and his daughter, and have shown us what happens to a man who has the audacity to believe that Jesus meant what He said. Mr. Maugham makes no effort to see the situation as a practical proposal, and it has here to be noted that the story of the young man who had great possessions is at once among the most familiar and the least understood of the tales in the New Testament. Jesus' injunction to this young man is regarded as a general injunction, although it is evident that if everybody was to sell all that they have and give to the poor, the essential economic situation would not be changed. There would merely be a transfer of property from one set of people to another. The injunction was addressed to one person, and it was addressed to him

because of his besetting sin - greed. He could not become a disciple because he was demented, as Walt Whitman says, with the mania for owning things. But if the young man by a great effort of will and spirit had accepted the divine advice, and had sold all his possessions, and had followed Jesus, might he not have entered a life of experience transcending anything he had hitherto known? That is the play Mr. Maugham ought to have written. It is the play he has still to write.

If, however, *Sheppey* fails us in its central argument, it does not fail us in its humanity. The young, indeed, come off badly in *Sheppey*, as they come off in nearly all Mr. Maugham's plays. How one loathes the young people in *The Breadwinner*, an ignobly conceited and mindless lot! Sheppey's daughter is a mean-minded creature, full of greed and without the bowels of compassion, and her fiancé, a council-school snob and prig, is even nastier, with his debating-society smartness and Rotary Club wisdom. He has more than his share of the dull man's passion for uniformity. 'It's always presumption,' he says, 'to think you know better than other people,' oblivious that no one in the play is more presumptuous than himself. When Mrs. Miller, exasperated by his slick disposal of the entire universe, ventures to inquire how he knows that Sheppey is not sane and that it 'ain't all the rest of us as are potty,' he replies, 'That's absurd. Sanity means doing what everybody else does, and thinking what everybody else thinks. That's the whole foundation of democracy. If the individual isn't prepared to act the same way as everybody

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else, there's only one place for him, and that's the lunatic asylum.' One feels that Ernie has been reading the later prefaces of Mr. Bernard Shaw. But Sheppey and his wife are pure gold, and the prostitute, Bessie, has virtues that make her vices seem unimportant. Few scenes in our drama are so moving as the manifestations of Mrs. Miller's simple love for her husband, and his for her. There is beauty in the commonplace language of this working-woman, whose pride in her housekeeping and her cooking is impressive in these times when skill is despised and cooks are giving place to tin-openers. In *Sheppey*, confused and beautiful and tender, Mr. Maugham makes his farewell to the theatre, but we have every right to refuse to accept his resignation and to demand that he shall go on from *Sheppey* to the great play that is still in his head. In Mr. Yeats's play, *The Shadowy Waters*, Forgael says:

I can see nothing; all's a mystery.

Yet sometimes there's a torch inside  
my head  
That makes all clear, but when the  
light is gone  
I have but images, analogies,  
The mystic bread, the sacramental  
wine,  
The red rose where the two shafts of  
the cross,  
Body and Soul, waking and sleeping,  
death, life,  
Whatever meaning ancient  
allegorists,  
Have settled on, are mixed into one  
joy.  
For what's the rose but that?  
miraculous cries,  
Old stories about mystic marriages,  
Impossible truths? But when the  
torch is lit  
All that is impossible is certain.'

Mr. Maugham must not put out the torch. He owes a duty to the young and generous-minded and socially-indignant doctor who lit a flame in Lambeth that must not be extinguished.

# Stanley Hutchinson

by Nugent Barker

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WELL, Mr. Bidmead had a sow. And she waun't no ordinary sow, for all that she spent her time grunting and wallering in the mire: but there was something about those eyes of her'n, a sparkle, a 'by yer leave,' an 'after you,' as ain't gener'ly to be found in sties. And it was onny reasonable to suppose that these fine manners might reveal theirselves later on in the liddle porkers that were gathered around her when the story began: it was whispered all over the place how the fat things should ought to grow up into swine of a special grandeur, seeing that their father was hisself a well-mannered hog, though his ways were less dential than their mother's, I reckon. So one day-morning, Mr. Bidmead waun't terrible surprised when one of the liddle fellers, whose age at that time must a been somewhere in the neighbourhood of six weeks or thereabout, walked up to the cottage, poked his snout round the door-jamb, and offered him, in the perliest manner possible, the time of day.

'Talkin',' said Mr. Bidmead. 'Now, ain't that very nice?' Whereupon he invited the liddle chap to dinner, and they got chatting and laughing together, and after an hour or so the old man asked him how his name was

called, and it turned out to be Stanley Hutchinson.

'I knowed some Hutchinsons once, lived over in Chailey,' said Mr. Bidmead; 'big chep, five darters, lost his wife in a railway accident. Took on the "Green Cross" when her feyther died.'

'Tain't those Hutchinsons,' said the liddle pig, turning up his snout; presently Mr. Bidmead brought out the elderberry wine; and from that day onward the old man did all that lay in his power to make that pig happy. Cooked him flour and water puddings; pushed up a rush-bottomed chair for his own using; read him bits out of the daily papers, or kept him supplied with the current prices of pork. And at night time they'd have out the cribbage cards, or maybe the backgammon board, and the bottle of elderberry wine would stand betwixt um: then it was that Mr. Hutchinson, after a few glasses, would come up with the funniest tales that you ever heard, or astound that old man with some of his clever tricks with matches. And last thing of all, when their eyes were so sleepy that they didn't know whatsumdaver to do with um, they'd go slapping up to bed, and Mr. Bidmead would lay awake for whole hours listening to Stanley Hutchinson snoring

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in the room opposite his'n, for he was a lonely man.

There never was a more eddicated pig than Stanley Hutchinson; and people used to come on foot and on horseback, in pony-traps and in farm-carts, from Houghton, and Madehurst, and Halnaker, and from beyond Ammerley, and from beyond Heyshott, to crack their jokes with him.

Now it came to pass, that what with the extra food and drink and other expenses, Mr. Bidmead found hisself one day at the end of all his money. The thought worried him, as you can imagine; looking towards Mr. Hutchinson, he couldn't hardly contrive to keep back his tears. So within three days he had decided that the onny thing to be done, the onny thing, was to go selling Stanley Hutchinson's relations for what they would fetch. Off he went to Tom Garrett, the carrier; 'lookee now, Tom Garr'tt,' said he. And so it was all arranged how the whole stock should be taken to Arundel in time for next market day.

Eh, dear oh me, that was a terrible sad parting. When Stanley Hutchinson larnt what was in the wind, he crept up to Mr. Bidmead's bedroom, and searched for a hankercher in a drawer: and by Job, there he found a golden coin, bright gold it was, with nicks upon it as sharp as new. And directly he see it, he thought how he'd like to swallow it, for in spite of all his eddication, in spite of his fine manners, in spite of everything, Stanley Hutchinson at heart was nothing but a pig. And then his eddication got the better of him, and he thought how he'd give it a liddle lick; so he give it a liddle

lick; and then he wrapped it up in the hankercher, and took it downstairs, and blowed his snout in the garden.

But he was a brave feller; and after a stroll or two up the paths, and over the flower-beds, he began to see how Mr. Bidmead's plan was all for the best. So he said to hisself: 'Lookee, Stan, lookee here, me pig, there's no hem use worritin' like a engineer'; and as soon as ever the old man had got his back turned, by Job, Stanley took his mother aside, and gave her the golden coin, telling her how it would keep her rich and contented during her last days – for she guessed exactly what was laid up for her in the time to come, surelye. With that, the old sow swallowed the golden coin, a sovereign it was, and good money; and when she turned back to the cart that was to take her and the children to Arundel, there was such an 'after you' look in her eyes that Stanley Hutchinson reckoned he hadn't ever felt so proud of her in his whole life. 'Gee up!' he cried. So the young porkers scrambled in first, while their brother looked up from the road and wished um good-bye.

'Goo'-bye, Elsie. Goo'-bye, Syd.' So it went round. 'Goo'-bye, Feyther. Give my love to Ethel.' For it was let on to the children how they were all going off to spend a few days with some cousins that they had never seen.

'Goo'-bye, Mother darlin',' said the liddle pig.

And so they all went away, and got killed.

## II

That evening, when Mr. Bidmead and the pig were half-way through their

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game of cribbage, they put up the cards, and turned their faces to the wood fire. 'Taint no go,' said the old man softly, thinking of the fine mess that he had got hisself into; and after trying him with some clever tricks with matches, Mr. Hutchinson thought the same.

So they went to bed; and on the following morning it was no different: dull voices, flat feet, and looks that waun't no better than a rush-light. But just as he was passing Stanley the sweet whey butter, all of a sudden the old man give out a great cry, fit to blow the whole of Slindon village off the top of the hill.

'Why, by Job!' he hollered, 'if I bain't the biggest fool that ever was borned!' And with that, he started to walk up and down the parlour, now this way, now that way, up and down the parlour he walked, with his hands behind him, and his eyes growing rounder every minute.

'What's wrong with 'ee now?' asked the liddle pig.

'Hoy, there's nothin' wrong at all!' cried Mr. Bidmead, 'everything's right - eh, lawk-a-mussy-me!' he shouted, grinning from ear to ear, 'it queers me why I didn't think ant before!' Whereupon the old chap began to sniffle as loud as he could.

'I jest be g'wine to git a pocket-hankercher, Mus Hutchinson,' said he.

'There's nothin' like um,' said the liddle pig. But Mr. Bidmead onny sniffed the louder, strutted up and down the parlour, and winked as though he'd never stop. 'To git a pocket-hankercher,' he kept on repeating, clasping his bony hands together: and all of a sudden the old man couldn't keep it

up a moment longer, but opened the door, and runned to his room as fast as the stairs would carry him; while Stanley put his trotters on the winder-sill, and watched the liddle sparrers as they played in the street.

There now, it waun't long before the old chap was down again, staring at nothing, and clenching his hands so that the knuckles gleamed.

'Wheer be my g-golden coin!' he whispered. 'Lawk-a-mussy-me, oh wheer be my g-golden coin!'

'What golden coin?' asked the liddle pig.

'Oh, Stanley, Stanley, wheer be my g-golden coin?'

'Which coin be that?' asked the liddle pig.

Yet nothing else would the old man say, but now and again he moaned a bit, and give out a real sniffle, for he was very upset and had clean forgotten to git his pocket-hankercher. So Stanley took a turn in the garden, saying to hisself how the fresh air would do him a power of good. There he went snuffing the snowdrops and the pretty coloured crocuses, and reading out the linen labels that the old man had tied upon sticks; and when at last he had come to the far end, with its row of tall trees and the empty sty where his mother had reared him, he shook his head, and for ten whole minutes walked like an undertaker, to and thro', to and thro', beneath the wintry branches.

Now, that was market day at Arundel; but this here worriting had put it clean out of Mr. Bidmead's mind. 'Eh, by Job!' he hollered, all of a sudden. And with that, the old man began to put on his gaiters at a hem of a



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rate, and to call hisself all the lamentable hard names that he could think of. So it happened that by the time the liddle pig had wandered back to the house, Mr. Bidmead was hurrying down Slindon hill on his way to Arundel, to attend the sale of Mr. Hutchinson's relations. Well, it waun't very long before Stanley guessed what was in the wind, so he fetched a paper, and set down in Mr. Bidmead's chair in the parlour, and spent his time figgering out the state of the pig market; but when Mr. Bidmead came home in the twilight, twitching his hands with excitement, and pulling in his lips so far that you couldn't see um, never a word did the old feller say, no, never one word, about the wunnerful prices that the hogs had fetched.

'I be middlin' rich,' he thought to hisself, 'I be middlin' rich.'

That night, for the first time, he spoke to Stanley Hutchinson about the missing coin, and the liddle pig went hunting all over the house to find where it had got to: 'tis hem strange, wheer it can a got to,' the pig murmured, nosing around. But Mr. Bidmead kept on thinking: 'I be middlin' rich . . . I be middlin' rich. . . .' Then he forgot how happy he was, and fretted like a miser for the lost coin.

### III

So the week went by; and although the weather suddenly changed, and early spring came to the beech woods of Slindon, there was always a nip in the evening air, when Mr. Bidmead, leaning forrard, threw another log on to the fire, and Mr. Hutchinson, leaning backard, watched in the flames

the sparkle of his mother's eyes. And sometimes Stanley would let on to hisself that he could hear the sow's soft trotters in the room; and once he heard her gulp the golden coin, at a single swaller, without as much as a 'How did ye come by it, Stan?'

One morning, when Mr. Bidmead was out faggoting, the postman handed in a parcel, and the liddle pig opened it, being it was urgent. And by Job, there lay the golden coin, wrapped in a letter, and placed in a box; and the letter came from a butcher over in Parham, telling Mr. Bidmead how he'd found the sovereign in the sow's innards.

Now, Stanley waun't prepared for this; and first thing he done, he thought how silly the whole thing was, and how he'd better keep the coin for hisself, like, and burn the letter straight-away. And then he thought how glad Mr. Bidmead would be to see that coin back again, and all his worritings over. So he took it up to the old man's bedroom, and put it into the drawer: and there it lay, and there it shone and sparkled, until the liddle pig fancied that there waun't a thing to equal it but the sparkle of his mother's eyes. And then he thought how suspicious the old man would be, finding it back in the drawer again; all this time the coin was winking, and suddenly he thought how much he'd like to swaller it. And then his eddication got the better of him, and he thought how he'd give it a liddle lick; so he give it a liddle lick; and at that moment, by Job, who did he hear on the stairs but Mr. Bidmead. With that, he wrapped the sovereign in a hankercher, and took it across to his room; and there he blowed

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his snout, and there he blowed it, and when he blowed his snout the second time he swallowed the golden coin.

So there it was; and that evening, when he had torn up the letter, and he and Mr. Bidmead were playing cribbage, his wits went wandering, to think how that coin would be his for evermore. 'Your play, Stanley,' said the pig's old friend. Coming out of his day-dream, the pig played a card; then he gazed into the fire, the fire put out its tongue at him, and young Hutchinson laughed.

For a long time after he'd swallowed the golden coin, Stanley Hutchinson did nothing but wink to hisself all day and half the night. Then the weather became warmer, and in the evenings he and Mr. Bidmead used to chat and laugh together over a fire that waun't as big as it used to be in the winter-time: and whether it was for this reason, I don't rightly know, but although he blinked, and peered, and listened as hard as ever he could, the liddle pig waun't able to see the sparkle of his mother's eye no longer, or to hear the voice that had always seemed to grunt so favourably at the things he'd done. It is said, too, that the whole of the room began to rock a liddle behind his back, and that the old clock ticked its way clean into the middle of Stanley Hutchinson's soul. Later still, when spring began to change to summer, and the old man used to let the fire burn out entirely after the cooking was over, the dark chimbley *did* seem to be lighted up by a red glow of firelight, surely: but the pig knew how it waun't that at all, no fear, it was the golden coin that

lay winking and burning in his innards.

So it went on, and Mr. Bidmead, kind old feller that he was, began to consarn hisself more than ever before with the comforts and pleasures of Mr. Hutchinson, bringing out the cribbage cards at all hours, and losing on purpose every mortal game that he put his hand to; fixing up the backgammon board, and going at it hammer and tongs, whether the liddle hog wished it or no; laughing like a nigger at the tricks with matches; and fetching in the elderberry wine whensumdever the pig looked a liddle bit hipped in the eye.

And on top of this, by Job, Stanley discovered that his mother's eyes were beginning to sparkle again; but this time he could see um in the paraffin lamp that the old man had bought out of the pig-money, and in the patches of light that twinkled on the new cups and sarcers and plates of Chailey china; and sometimes, when the nights were very sleepy and hot, the old man would fall into a doze, with a smile upon his lips, and after a while his mouth would hang open, so that all of a sudden the room would fetch up with a snore as loud as a hog's. And at last Stanley Hutchinson couldn't abide it a moment longer. So one day near the beginning of June, he went to Mr. Bidmead, and gave it in how he would go searching for the lost coin.

'I jústabout can't tell 'ee what makes me think so,' said the liddle pig, 'but I have an idea,' said he . . . 'I dunno but what,' he continued, 'I'll sure find that golden coin far, far away.'

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Then the old man looked at him, and said:

'If so be as I thought there was any truth in these words o' your'n, Stan, why then, I reckon I'd tell 'ee to go and search for the coin, surelye. But how can a chap,' said the old man thoughtfully, 'go searchin' for a golden coin what he's never seen, what he's never knowed the date of, what he'd never even heard tell of before that morning many weeks ago when I runned upstairs to my bedroom for to git me a pocket-handkercher?' So he went on, talking and talking, and all the time he was thinking to hisself most miserably: 'Stan could tell me summat about that golden coin, I reckon.' For the pig didn't know that the butcher had written again from Parham, a month earlier, asking Mr. Bidmead why he hadn't acknowledged the liddle parcel. Mr. Bidmead had gone to the postman; and, hearing the most disturbing news that waun't entirely disconnected with Stanley Hutchison, ever since that time the old chap had been beezeled as to whether he should go prying further, for fear he might bring the most terrible shame upon hisself and the liddle cottage. Eh, by Job, it was a frightening thought! Mr. Hutchinson! His own Stanley! The cleverest pig in the village! And now, looking down at his toes, then round the parlour, and again at the liddle pig, Mr. Bidmead reckoned all at once how it would be wiser to ask no tom-fool questions about the matter, being as he'd onny get perky answers or maybe a few witty jokes that would leave him nowhere. So he said nothing. But he took a basket, and in it he put brown bread; and he put a pound of butter in it, and he put

some cheese in it, and then he put some eggs in it, and then he put some salt and pepper in it, and a liddle elderberry wine, and then he put some apples in it, and then he said good-bye, and the pig went.

He went on a fine, blowy day in summer, and Slindon village knew him no more. Eh, dear oh me, how sudden it all was. And how they wondered whether he would ever come back. . . . But I can tell you a liddle of his journey; I can foller him as far as my eyes reach.

In spite of the wind, it was a very hot day, for it was a very hot wind; and by the time he had come to the bottom of Slindon hill, lawk-a-mussy-me, the basket was empty, clean holler it was, and Stanley Hutchinson sat upon his haunches, lifted his snout, and set up a most dismal cry.

Well, there waun't nothing for it but that he must go begging, which he done, and so prettily, that by Job, he was able to get as much again as he had eaten, and he ate that too; and so it went on, until you couldn't have told him from a balloon-ball; and then he disappeared beyond the corner; and after that . . . he took hisself . . . I feel so certain sure . . . towards the place where they go killing and curing pigs. . . .

### IV

Now, that ain't the end of the story. It's no more the end of the story than this story is the end of the world. But the disappearance of Stanley Hutchinson was the end of Mr. Bidmead, poor man. Two days after the pig had left him, the golden

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coin came back, and Mr. Bidmead couldn't hardly contain hisself for joy, but started to run from room to room of the liddle cottage, for it's a strange thing how much more pleased he was with the one sovereign than with all the money that he had got for the pigs. There was a bit of the miser in Mr. Bidmead, I reckon; yet no one can say that the old chap was selfish, and his eyes shone like gold when he thought to hisself: 'My Stan will be follering soon.' So he arranged a lot of surprises for his pig Stan. He bought some fish, and ice to keep it as fresh as a daisy; and he bought some eggs, and heaped um in a pyramid on a plate; and he give the elderberry wine a taste, to see if it hadn't turned a liddle; and he brought some roses from the garden, and stood um out in ornaments and jugs; and he shuffled all the cribbage cards, and even went so far as to shake the backgammon dice, ready for throwing; and the pig never came. That was in June. In July the old man couldn't hardly shamble up to his bedroom; in August he waun't no better than a clodpate; near the middle of autumn the villagers shook their heads over the fire.

'He had no ought to take up with a pig like Stan,' they muttered; 'that business has catched a holt of him, surely.'

But bless ye, I disremember half the things they said of Bidmead, who onny put his fingers in his ears, like, and fared his own way. His clothes went to pieces, the garden grew, he ate where he would, never spreading the table-cloth; and his nose sniffled for want of a hankercher. One night he gazed oddly over the parlour; he kept

on blinking his liddle pig-eyes as though he'd no ought to be there.

'Tis no use, hangin' on in this purty place,' he muttered; 'I just about don't remember what everything's for.' So he shuffled out of his chair; then, seeing the cribbage cards, put um idly into his pocket. Afterwards he turned out the light, and left the cottage for the last time.

The wind blew, and clouds rushed over the sky; the moon kept peeping out at shortish intervals, and during one of um the old man put his hand into his pocket, and took out the golden coin. It was all he had left, the rest of his money was clean gone, and as he looked at it he thought how he'd like to swaller it. But the fag end of his eddication got the better of him, and he thought how he'd give the coin a liddle lick; so he give it a liddle lick; and with that, he went shuffling and padding to the bottom of the garden.

The wind was tossing through the trees. Sometimes it sounded like human laughter, and sometimes like the voices of all kinds of animals, from geese to elephants. The shape of the sty rose up before him; and when he opened the door, and peeped inside, he give a grunt of satisfaction.

'Gruntin',' said a liddle voice. 'Now, ain't that very nice?' And by Job, there was Stanley Hutchinson's ghost; and from that day to this, nobody never goes near the sty, nobody never goes near it, because of the voices that can be heard there, in the small hours, grunting and laughing together over the cribbage cards.

And if you don't believe this story, you ought to, and if you don't believe it, you can be no lover of pigs, and if you

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don't believe it, that's a pity; why, everybody in Slindon will tell you how it was all true. And maybe that's the onpy virtue in it. For it ain't Shakespeare, by a long chalk, and it ain't Milton, and it ain't even Bunyan, though I suppose at a pinch it might be called the story of a Pig's Progress.

# The Candle-light

by Yone Noguchi

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IN my boyhood reminiscences I appear selling candles at a neighbouring temple where an Okaicho is held. Okaicho is a festival for exhibiting a Buddha image which is particularly distinguished, and not commonly seen by the people. I was nine years old then ; by invitation of the temple priest I took this holy rôle of sales-boy at a corner of the altar hall, where votaries from ten miles around were choked by incense whirling in rings. The gold idol of Buddha placed in the centre of the hall looked down smilingly, as though on the point of speaking, over the human waves muttering prayers in unison. The offering money was thrown pell-mell at the image. As I remember, I was dressed like a gentleman in *Haori* and *Hakama*, a ceremonial silken dress. Flattering myself that I had a lovely voice fitting for a singer, I raised it loudly: 'Men and women of faith, make an offering of candles! One candle makes your soul clean. Ten candles insure your birth in Paradise. Buddha's promise is as sure as a rock!'

Thirty years later this candle-seller of an insignificant Japanese town is in London, where he is fed and petted handsomely as somewhat of a poet. Released from a huge drawing-room with a Victorian ostentation that made him restless as he drank afternoon tea,

heavy as bovril, he passed one Sunday evening by Westminster Abbey, when the vesper-bell rang out. Being sensitive to religious things of any kind, he could not withhold himself from entering the Abbey in spite of his ignorance of Christianity, where under the ceiling that looked almost menacing he was but a pagan mouse losing his way. But candle-light already glowed, and, although not so modest and thin as that of Japanese candles, spoke doubtless the same celestial language ; his mind was led straightway into composure. With many thanks to the candles which were kind in their heart, though stout in appearance like Englishmen, he sat mingling with people who were waiting for the husky voice of a preacher. He would not object, he thought then, to taking the office of selling candles if he were asked to.

My reminiscence of Oxford is made delightful by candle-light and chimes. When my lecture was over at the hall of Magdalen's College, I withdrew into the common room where, to the accompaniment of a wood fire, the candles were humming a song of welcome. Shuffling off the mediæval superiority of priests or magistrates, many dons surrounded me with all sorts of questions, wise or silly, which made the candles wink at me in sympathy with my situation. I had often read about

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the common-room talk as a speciality of Oxford; now I amused myself thinking that the calm perpetuity of Oxford was something invented by a Mr. Grundy. However, this memorial convention, as far as I was concerned, broke off when the college chime reminded us of time, though not because of religious sobriety. I left the common room with Robert Bridges, who took me round to the chapel where the candles were burning, their reflection making the wooden panels at the sides shine. Not one student was found in the chapel. With a little smile of wisdom and satire, Bridges looked at me, saying: 'Students hate religion - don't you know it?' We bade the candles good-night, leaving them in nocturnal solitude to burn and shine alone. Even to-day I cannot help thinking that they are still burning beautiful and lonesome.

On my way home from London I stopped at Moscow for a week, where I saw a forest fire of candles, because the Kremlin, a sanctuary and spiritual fortress at that time, was commemorating the canonization of some saint. The sight of almost fanatic crowds of country pilgrims, sandal-footed, carrying cotton quilts on their backs for sleeping out, together with those audacious cupolas of gold, highly coloured walls and roofs, made me think at once of the savage extravagances where incongruity, warm and elemental, howled at civilization with intellectual restlessness, and abandoned itself even to mystery. But what I want to speak of here is the candles burning with motionless patience and disregard of time, that made the Kremlin a symbol of religious asceti-

cism. Without knowledge as to what it was, I lost my own criticism against it; and in spite of myself, just like the Gorkis or Stalins I had seen in the street, I traced a sacred cross on my breast. I was also impressed by smaller places of worship at each street corner, where, attended by nuns black-hooded and black-robed, the little candles were burning. Although I was not sure whether I could pretend to be a pilgrim with a quilt on my back, I thought that I could easily return there in Moscow to a boy selling candles for the worshippers.

Living now in Japan, I sometimes visit Kyoto where, to please my mind, religious or poetical, I find my way toward the lonely Honen-in Temple nestled among the pine-trees, because I know that a few candles are kept burning there through the night. I wonder if there is anything like candle-light in an altar-room which, having no one before it, shines nobler and ghastlier? A few years ago when I climbed up Mount Koya, not so far from Osaka, where the monk Kobo of the early ninth century established his monastery, I walked alone late at night under the moonlight toward the inmost sanctuary along a narrow path where a thousand tombs stood under the huge cryptomerias. There was no human sound except my own footsteps echoing to the ghosts of departed souls. Received by candles burning sadly, I sat before the sanctuary deep in loneliness that numbed me almost to death. I do not remember how I left the place that night. What is distinct in my mind at present is that the candle-light at the sanctuary shone like a star beckoning to a stray soul.

# Clifford Sharp

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HE was a difficult man. It was only when you realized that he knew that he was difficult, that he was a difficulty to himself, that you could understand or love him. Insolent in manner, arrogant in opinion, contemptuous of much he did not understand, Clifford Sharp was essentially nervous, lonely and with a profound diffidence which his manner hid from those who met him. As time went on, and his manner hardened into habit, he was sometimes deceived about himself and imagined that his strength, which he had acquired at great mental and spiritual effort, was natural to him. His sensitiveness, rarely expressed except when his friends were ill or in trouble, could be seen in the lines of his mouth and in the eyes which always held a certain surprise that he had missed the things he missed; but he never permitted himself any idle self-commiseration.

He was a prose genius: not merely a genius in prose, but of a character which found it hard to believe how large a part poetry plays in the lives of many people. Such men are generally men of action: and Clifford Sharp would have been a great soldier. Pure prose genius is a rare thing; for that *μανία* which is genius tends, as a rule, to make a man free of the poetic, and the great prose men usually lack genius, while unfortunately some shoddy men – Hitler is a conspicuous

example – who possess a touch, however degenerate, of the poetic, by its power have, too, something of genius. Voltaire is perhaps the clearest instance of a man of genius without any touch of the poetic, for even Gibbon approaches it in his attitude to certain aspects of the civilization whose decline he records. Most of Sharp's prejudices can only be appreciated if we remember this lack in him – a lack which did not in the least prevent him having an absorbed interest, rather irregularly sustained and often gravely misdirected, in religion and in mysticism. Those of us who stress the supremacy of poetry are too often insolently forgetful of the fact that the great majority of men, at any rate in this country, have little direct and conscious appreciation of the poetic; and we misjudge the measure in which these give their support to those fundamentals of which poetry is, after all, only the highest symbol. The fact that our arrogance is displayed usually by silence or evasion makes it not better but worse than Clifford Sharp's downright repudiation of what he thought was nonsense. He could not see certain values; we see values, only less important than our own, and shut our eyes to them because they are presented in an unfriendly or unfamiliar guise. Wherefore our damnation is the greater.

I met Clifford Sharp for the first



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time in 1913, just after the *New Statesman* had been launched, with him as editor. I was taken to dine at his house by a friend who believed Sharp would be glad to have me work for the paper. I was doubtful. I was not a Fabian or any other kind of Socialist. I had friends and acquaintances among the Fabians, liked and admired many of them; but I found in their society (there were exceptions) a touch of the Little Bethel at its most exclusive – an atmosphere which reminded me of the Brethren (commonly called Plymouth) whom I had known in my childhood. This fear that I should be dismissed as damned, essentially an unworthy fribble, was dissipated as soon as I met Clifford Sharp. He had no loyalties except to truth, courage and a few friends: never was an editor less of a party man. He was a tall, strongly-made man, abrupt in speech and using words to help him not only to organize, but actually to formulate his thoughts. Often that evening I felt Sharp had no opinion on some subjects we discussed until he had expressed it, and then the force of his expression gave body to an opinion arrived at in the mere act of expressing it. What he had said, he had said: or rather what he had brought forth was true – a fact to be admitted or contradicted or ignored. In a sense almost mystical Clifford Sharp's opinions were his children: once said, there they were; and his sardonic amazement at the folly of any man who denied them was not anger at his opponent's refusal to agree with him, but dismay at his inability to recognize a plain, lively, noisy fact. Always he would rather

be wrong than uncertain, precisely because there were many things of which he was uncertain, and he could not resolve that uncertainty until he had spoken his mind on the subject. Then he could deal with the subject and his own view of it. Uncertainty was an agony to him: his world was one of sharp outlines, not of melting colours or graded values – and he could not even know that he was wrong – and he would sometimes admit he was wrong – until he had stated his opinion. We differed about many things that night. We talked mostly about literature, and I made no secret of the fact that I thought his judgment so capricious that I could hardly argue with him. He was, at this time, firm in his conviction that Arnold Bennett was the greatest novelist then writing; and a mild suggestion that he should look at the work of Charles Marriott and of E. M. Forster was greeted with an incurious amazement that I should waste my time over authors that he did not bother with. Yet I never found his exclusiveness or his limitations annoying, because they were acutely personal. Nobody ever paid less homage to the dreadful 'Everyone is reading it' fashion that has done so much to rot criticism. Clifford Sharp did not care a hoot whether he was or was not abreast of 'current thought': nor was he at all worried if he formed a strong personal attachment to an author who, for a time, became the fashion, even the fashion in circles he despised and distrusted. He was an enthusiast for Dostoevsky when South Kensington went all Slavonic, and he remained sanely enthusiastic about the great

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Russian long after the fashion decreed other wear for the intellectual suburbs.

I was interested in his hatred for the work of John Galsworthy, whom of all modern novelists he most detested. I came to a conclusion then which subsequent knowledge of Clifford Sharp has only confirmed, though many who saw more of him than I vehemently dispute it. Sharp had in him a deep vein of sentiment, almost of sentimentality, and was desperately afraid of it. It was akin to his acute sense of social inadequacy, especially with women: and the fact that most of his friends thought this self-conscious nervousness unnecessary did not in the least relieve Sharp's torments. Rightly or wrongly he believed that, for him, any expression of sentiment, any abandonment of the harsh vigour by which he cloaked his inner self, was dangerous. He belonged to a family which had known religious enthusiasm in an extreme form, and one of the heroes of his boyhood was Grenfell of Labrador. He once said to me that he believed he would have done better had he followed his impulse and joined Grenfell, 'and I know I should have been happier.' He never lost his desire for self-surrender, and it is not untrue to say that he put the Paper into the place which might otherwise have been occupied by a religious vocation. He had a deeply emotional nature, and a great capacity and need for affection; but some distrust made him afraid that he might, did he allow that aspect of his character the freedom he longed for, become the victim of an enthusiasm which would deflect his judgment. His passionate adherence to common sense was rooted

in a conviction that one of his greatest temptations was to ignore and despise its dictates.

What he was to the paper everyone knows. He *was* the *New Statesman*. I am sure that all his colleagues will subscribe to that statement. All of us, from the most brilliant to the least important, felt the organic unity which Sharp gave to his weekly – a unity which no other organ of opinion, not even Massingham's *Nation*, could rival, and which none to-day endeavours to secure. J. C. Squire, Desmond MacCarthy, S. K. Ratcliffe, C. M. Lloyd, G. D. H. Cole, Robert Lynd, Sisley Huddleston, and many others of keen individuality and strong convictions all wrote not merely in the *New Statesman*, or for it, but *with* it. He showed us all that there was a kind of journalistic service that made for greater freedom than could be achieved in those other papers which attracted by names rather than by matter. His rule about signatures was a simple one. Or rather he had two rules. Work could be signed, generally by pseudonyms, when the articles, appearing regularly, were so personal in character that their authorship was evident. Solomon Eagle and Y. Y. were the first, I think, to be given this privilege, except for Sharp's father-in-law, Hubert Bland, who was the first reviewer of fiction. Then, later in the paper's history, a signature became a reward. This change was made partly under the influence of Desmond MacCarthy, who has always argued that to have his name in an established paper is an encouragement to a young writer. Sharp did not believe much

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in direct encouragement. He rarely praised a man's work to himself. I remember once when, in despair of editorial commendation, I said something in praise of an article of my own, Sharp replied gruffly: 'Of course it was good. You always are good in the *New Statesman*. Wouldn't print your stuff, unless you were;' and I had far more gratification from that than I have ever had from the voluntary and excessive praise of other editors who, in spite of their hearty eulogiums, often found it quite easy to do without my work.

But how emphatically he would praise his colleagues behind their backs! 'There's nothing I'm prouder of, nothing, so much as having secured Y. Y. - that alone has made the paper worth while' - which, considering the political importance of the *New Statesman*, was fairly extreme praise from the editor. Or again, 'You know I've been damn lucky to have Lloyd. I believe he is the best leader-writer in London'; or, 'Don't you think Tommy Earp writes amazingly well about pictures? It's a ghastly job, and he's never either fluffy or pedantic' - pedantic was not the word, but it was what Sharp meant. So, on one afternoon when he and I were, in 1929, reviewing the paper's past and its prospects, he ran through his contributors' and colleagues' names, distributing encomiums with a lavishness which would have surprised most of them.

Clifford Sharp was not trained for journalism: he had intended to be an engineer, and was diverted into writing through his early association with the Fabian Society. When the

*New Statesman* started, with the backing of the Webbs, Bernard Shaw and others, most of us expected it to be a Fabian organ: perhaps the backers expected it. They reckoned without their editor, and it does them infinite credit that they saw it was better to let Sharp make the paper a free organ of radical opinion. A 'tied' house never supplies such good refreshment as a 'free' one. Whether as political journalist or as editor Sharp was in the first rank. He lived in and for the paper. He was great not only in the intellectual and assembling task of an editor, he was admirable in all those details of make-up and appearance which seem unimportant to the amateur, but actually have a profound effect on a paper's fortunes. There was no part of the paper in which he did not take an interest: and there was no department which was not, at one time or another, helped by his suggestions. In its early days the *New Statesman* had a hard fight, as have all new papers with small circulations, to get advertisements; and the job was made no easier by the paper's politics and its connection with Socialism. All advertisers are sheep, and the slowest sheep of all - with a few honourable exceptions - are publishers. In January, 1914, I found Sharp in a mood of mingled indignation and despair because his very capable manager had failed once more to secure one publisher's advertisements - the publisher was a new and enterprising man (hadn't he published and paid for a book of mine?), and I suggested that I should write to him. 'No,' said Sharp, 'I'll write to him myself.' Next week I looked in

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to hear what happened. Silently Sharp gave me the publisher's letter. It was to say that since the *New Statesman* reviewed practically all the books he issued, he saw no reason for any further advertisement! This bland impudence pleased Sharp. The one way to enrage him was to be subservient, or deferential, or merely to echo his opinions. He always preferred a conflict to meek acquiescence, and was uneasy if there was not, in each number of the paper, something that annoyed at least one subscriber. I have rarely seen him so pleased with me as he was, after he had printed some poems of mine (which he was right in thinking no one else would have published), with the result, as he gleefully told me, that three original subscribers had announced their determination to stop taking the paper: 'Of course they won't - they'll buy it at the newsagent's, to find other things to grumble about.'

He was a generous and in unexpected ways a considerate editor. I had been contributing, for some time almost once a week, for some fifteen years to the paper when I had a letter from him - I was then living out of London - to say that for some years the printers had charged double for setting up my copy, and were now threatening to charge treble. 'Could you possibly have your work typed? If you can, it will be convenient; but if you'd rather not, of course we'll pay.' I had my articles typed. He was, I suppose, an extravagant editor - for the proprietors; but he never disguised his opinion that they were very lucky men to be allowed to spend their money on so good a cause - and

fortunately a generous board, though sometimes dismayed, on the whole agreed with him. He became very proud of his profession. One of the few occasions I have seen him really angry - not disgusted or contemptuous - was when, through some inadvertence, a sentence had been published which he thought was an insult to Mr. J. L. Garvin. 'Garvin,' he said, 'is after all the doyen of my profession, and I will not have him treated impertinently in my paper.' He was completely loyal to his staff and his contributors, and would indeed sometimes shoulder responsibility when one wished he would not. An author wrote to complain of an unsigned review of mine: his letter was good copy, and gave me an excellent chance of effective retort. Sharp would not print it. 'No: the man is a — fool.' 'Well, give me the letter and let me answer him privately.' 'No: it was an unsigned review. It's the paper's opinion. The man is a — fool. I'll write and tell him.' And I've no doubt he did.

When war broke out, the *New Statesman* was only in its second year of existence. Sharp wanted to enlist. He was persuaded by his friends and by those responsible for the paper that it was his duty to stay at his desk: never was a powerful organ more necessary, or a great editor. So the proprietors applied for that exemption which was, practically automatically, granted to all London editors who were of a military age. In the conflict between Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, Sharp was vehemently Asquithian. He not only at that time believed that Mr. Lloyd George was a

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treacherous colleague, he believed he was a danger to the allied cause. I was lunching with him on the day that the news of Kitchener's death came to London: Sharp said, 'You know the Minister of Munitions nearly went too? What a pity he didn't!' The famous leader, 'Had Zimri peace ——?' – the latter part of which was never printed – which he wrote after the fall of Mr. Asquith, was in temper and style an article worthy of the days of Cobbett or of Jack Wilkes. There can be no question that Sharp and the *New Statesman* – for its influence by that time was great – were in grave disfavour at Downing Street. Now employers of labour were granted exemptions for the men whom they employed if they could satisfy certain local tribunals, oddly constituted bodies, that the work on which these men were engaged was of national importance. The *New Statesman* under Sharp's control was certainly without any taint of pacificism. Its patriotism was as free from suspicion as from sloppiness: and none of us imagined that any tribunal could refuse exemption to its editor. So it came as a great shock at the end of 1916 to hear that the directors' application had been refused. Sharp was, I believe, the only London editor to whom exemption was denied. It seemed monstrous to most radicals, whether they were bellicose or conscientious objectors, that the editing of the *New Statesman* should not be considered 'work of national importance'; and the feeling about it was strong and bitter.

I was ill; and later on did not manage to see Sharp when I called at

the office; but in the beginning of 1917, when I was in a nursing-home convalescing after an operation for appendicitis, Sharp came to see me. He was at his best on such an occasion, anxious, kindly and expert in the kind of talk calculated to make one forget one's sickness. After some time he told me, 'I've been refused exemption any longer.' He seemed glad: and his only thought, he told me, was which of the fighting services, and which branch, he could do best in. He had tried, he said, to join the Air Force. 'I suppose I ought to go to the Engineers; but I can't bear the idea of tunnelling. It's feeble of me, but I can't stand working underground' He was rejected for the Air Force – 'They stripped me naked, kept me waiting for hours, then turned me down because my hand shook' – and enlisted in a Line regiment. He was not to remain there, but I do not remember how long he wore khaki. The story of how his career as a Tommy ended I did not have from him, and there may be some legendary touches in it: it was told to me by friends in the Admiralty, where I was working. In 1917 the Allies were disturbed at conditions in Sweden: the capital of that country was said to be a nucleus of German agents and very skilful pro-German propagandists, and our men were not adequate for the job of exposing them. A Foreign Office man called on Mr. Granville-Barker, who was working in the Intelligence Department – 'I say, you know clever people, and you know people who are some kind of Socialists, which is just what we want for Stockholm. Do you know a man we could send there?'

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'I'm not sure that I do; but I know a man who is certain to – Sidney Webb.' 'Good, ask Webb, will you?' So Webb was asked, and instantly replied, 'Yes, I know exactly the man you want; but he's just been called up under the Derby scheme, and is a private somewhere.' This was reported to the F O., whereupon the official there – 'What – the War Office trying to snaffle a man *we* want!' And Sharp was out of khaki and soon on his way to Stockholm. I saw him just before he went: and he told me then what he frequently repeated afterwards, that never in his life had he been so happy as a Tommy under orders, with no responsibilities of any kind. It seemed strange to me then: but afterwards I understood it. All his life Sharp was anxious to escape from the burden which choice laid on him. He was an admirable dictator, because he took on that job from a sense of duty, not from any urgent desire. He believed in freedom not because he enjoyed it, but because he thought it was right for people to have it, and their duty to put up with its discomforts; but when his conscience put him into a position when he could obey, had no choice, and no freedom, he rejoiced in it.

If I think of what were Clifford Sharp's chief qualities as a man, qualities he would have had whatever profession he followed, I think of honesty and courage. Uncomfortable honesty, often, and unthinking courage – but each in a very rare degree. He was never guilty of that sly intellectual offence of attempting to rationalize his prejudices – and so he could abandon them (though he seldom

did!) or admit exceptions to them. He disliked France and the French, India and the Indians, our 'black brother,' women writers, the *Nation*, birth-control and the more sentimental kind of religious agnosticism. He exercised his privilege as an Englishman of regarding Celts as an inferior kind of British, and admiring and loving some Irishmen more than most of his English friends. So, too, he appreciated to the full two such passionate Gallophiles as Mr. Belloc and Mr. Huddleston, and he raised his usual ban against women journalists for the sake of Rebecca West. I have never known any man whose prejudices, when they were counter to one's own, hurt one's feelings less. They were differences of taste, in the strict sense. Nor were they ever allowed to affect his principles or the policy of the paper. He had no use, as I have indicated, for sentiment about Negroes; but when I asked him to see Dr. Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, and hear the case against forced labour, Sharp gladly consented, and Dr. Weston found no juster or more sympathetic supporter in his campaign.

Elizabeth Bibesco, in her tribute to Clifford Sharp, says, 'He never allowed a free hand to any of his contributors.' I cannot quite agree with this. He never, of course, gave up the right to reject, to alter (if the contribution were unsigned) or to ask the contributor to alter any particular article; but as the paper acquired more and more definite personality of its own, he trusted old contributors to write in a way that was conditioned by that character. He told me himself that, after 1920, he never read anything of

## Clifford Sharp

mine before it went to the printer, and often did not read it in proof – and only once did he send an article back and ask me to alter it. I was only an outside contributor: and I know that for years Sharp gave a perfectly free hand to those on the staff who were not writing on those political matters where he suspected there might be a difference between their views and his own, between their views and the paper's.

The *New Statesman* was Clifford Sharp: but Sharp was not the *New Statesman*. He had interests, opinions, convictions which he would not attempt to force on the paper. No one knew the real Sharp who did not know him in his home, and on his rare holidays. To work with him was to see the ablest, but also often the most unreasonable, side of him. I can remember him in the summer of 1914, before the declaration of war, in a little cottage in Dorset, laughing at my taste in books, arguing lightly about English and Irish, discussing religion – he was always insistent that, though God certainly is, he could not believe in universal immortality, and used harsh language about MacTaggart's philosophy when I tried to expound it to him. It was then I realized what a trick of the tongue his excessive positiveness was: and how easily he could be influenced on minor matters. He loved authority, and was apt to set up as an authority the first man he met who knew something definite on a subject which he himself had not studied. It might be wine or it might be metaphysics: and often it was embarrassing to discover the simplicity with which a rather casual opinion of one's own had been

accepted by Sharp, and the vigour with which it was affirmed. It was liking for authority, genuine or bogus, natural or acquired, which, in youth, led him to worship Grenfell, and later gave him his interest in Ouspensky and Gourdjaiev. It was the note of authority in Arnold Bennett which charmed him, and he never quite realized how much Bennett's authority was only put on to impress. Argument with Sharp was conducted not by any system of dialectic, but by a series of blank statements and blank contradictions. Yet he was much less obstinate than many more evasive and polite people. Once I was vigorously defending the wit and intelligence of a great friend of mine, an author whom Clifford detested (and rarely, I suspect, read). 'She's no good. She has no sense, no experience. She knows nothing. She's a dried-up, spinsterish virgin.' 'But, Clifford, a woman of forty-odd who is a virgin *has* an experience of which no married woman can boast. Virginity is not a passive thing.' He glared at me, then smiled that rare smile of his. 'H'm. There's something in that.'

As an editor he had one fault, which all great editors have. He believed the paper would go to pieces if he was away for any length of time. It was, his colleagues knew, extraordinarily hard to make him leave the paper, forget it and trust it in their charge. So he went on working: and as his strength weakened under the continuous labour, he became more and more inclined to seek refuge in that medicine which has been the bane of Fleet Street. It were unkind to his memory to make a secret of

## Clifford Sharp

the fact that Clifford Sharp drank too much; or that when he took, under great pressure and very unwillingly, a year's leave towards the beginning of 1930, he was in danger of death. He had always been used to drink, and his strong head and sound constitution made him unwilling to believe that he could exceed. Nor, I think, was his indulgence really dangerous until he began to drink at work, and find he could not work without it. It was not, however, only to enable him to work. He became increasingly nervous of social occasions, and yet knew that a good journalist could not afford to be a hermit — so he drank in order to be able to go out, and then drank more when he was at the party. He believed so firmly that he could always stop if he liked that he disdained to put it to the test. His positiveness of statement served him instead of action. When action was forced on him, he was cured for a time: but then his resignation had been accepted, and without his paper he was lost, and in his loss he turned to his old medicine. Nor could one be certain that he would have succeeded in conquering that subtle enemy if he had gone back to his desk. He was weakened, and found writing harder; and in his efforts to do his best in familiar surroundings, he might easily have had recourse to the familiar drug.

No one will presume to judge him, at least none of his old colleagues. He suffered from an illness which is particularly likely to attack men of his temperament in his profession; and those who are free from it need not

boast over him any more than they would boast over one who succumbed to influenza, or to an obscure complaint, for which, thinking he could cure it by diet, the sufferer refused an operation.

One last picture. In 1915 Clifford Sharp and I went to the military camp at Wool, near Lulworth, to see a friend of ours (the man who had first introduced me to him) who was under training there: he was then a sergeant. We sat on the beach of Lulworth Cove, discussing where we should go that afternoon. Clifford took a Bartholomew map out of his pocket, and we three looked over it. Suddenly we heard a raucous cry, 'Put that map away!' It came from a sergeant above us on the cliff. I looked up in amazement, and was surprised when Clifford obediently folded up the map, and put it back in his pocket, saying quietly, 'Let's go and look at it in the inn.' 'But, Clifford, we're doing no harm. No submarine officer is going to read our map through a telescopic periscope. Besides, the Germans have got maps. The man's a nervous fool.' By this time another sentry was walking towards us. He came up. 'You ought to know better than look at a map on the beach,' he said, as if a map were a mine with a percussion cap. 'All right,' said Clifford, rising, 'we'll go to the inn.' We walked away, Clifford placid, our sergeant friend amused, and I in fuming indignation 'Of all the —.' 'Don't fuss,' said Clifford. 'I like to see a man keen on his job.'

Let that be his epitaph.

R. E. R.



To JANE

# The Delectable Sutton

by Frank Kendon

---

My garden is in all dull eyes  
A dreary muddy half-acre;  
Its leafless beds, its rockeries,  
Its ragged lawns, its chilly air,  
Its walks, where no one ever walks,  
Its dragged bird that never talks,  
Its fruitless, leafless apple trees,  
Its grainless barns and granaries,  
Its liquid echo of men's tread,  
Make those resolve, who visit me,  
When they get home to go to bed,  
And never to go out to tea  
In future – I don't care a button;  
Give me the catalogues of Sutton!

Oh, Sutton's cheap, and Sutton's fair,  
And Sutton's fairly prompt by post;  
And if I had a son and heir  
Instead of this unnumbered host  
Of daughters, I would say: My boy,  
Let men like Sutton be your joy,  
Leave cards and wine and midnight revels  
To the ungardened. They, poor devils,  
May be excused a flirt or two;  
Satan will find them work to do;  
But Sutton shall suffice for you.

Behold the catalogue, sent gratis;  
Begin with kitchen-garden stuff:  
The happy man is he whose state is  
Sufficient – here you'll find enough!  
Green peas, called Marrowfat, in pods,  
Fat enough to feast the gods,  
Leeks like clubs of Hercules,  
And more green peas, and more green  
peas,  
And more green peas, for greedy folks;

Dwarf runner beans, sweet artichokes,  
The sort that like potatoes grow,  
And those more lordly ones, that blow –  
Whose monstrous heavy flowers in bud  
Are cut and boiled and served for food.

Turn over: see the curly kale,  
The whiteheart cabbage, the broad bean,  
The beetroot swart, the turnip pale,  
The onion, of all roots the queen.

Turn over: here grow sage and  
mint  
For garnishing cold joints of mutton,  
Parsley and thyme, for stuffing sent –  
Turn over – What a man is Sutton!  
No vegetable to him is dull;  
Even potatoes, oft despised,  
In Sutton's book look beautiful,  
Knobby and plump, but civilised.

But do not think, young son and heir,  
That only useful plants are fair.  
An appetite, too true, is good,  
And pleasant company for food;  
But when the summer dinner ends,  
When solemn Evening would make friends  
With well-dined mortals (but no gluttons)  
She also will rely on Suttons.

White snowdrops with their vests of  
green  
Begin the year with Sutton's blessing;  
You put them in, they rest unseen,  
But when long winter grows depressing,  
Up from the sodden earth they get,  
And whisper: 'Don't give up just yet.'  
White snowdrops, then, and daffodils,  
Gold crocus cups, and cyan squills,

## The Delectable Sutton

The early aconites, that grow  
Like ballet dancers, on tip-toe,  
Jonquils and fritillaries,  
Tulips and anemones,  
Lupins, candytuft and stocks,  
Larkspur, pinks and hollyhocks,  
Avens, lavender, and broom,  
Calceolaria, almond bloom,  
Sops in Wine, and Bachelor's Button –  
This is a fraction of old Sutton.

My Dauphin (this is what I'd say),  
Turn the page and change the season,  
Men must get what sweets they may,  
This was Mr. Sutton's reason.  
Even Lists of flowers make some  
Purchase a geranium,  
But Catalogues, with Illustrations,  
Make a million, with impatience,  
Post an order in advance  
For several thousand different plants.

Behold the gardens of the rich,  
Whose gardener tells them which is  
which,  
Whose gardener orders what he likes,  
And spends what's left on motor-bikes,  
Whose gardener keeps whose hot-house  
hot,  
And knows if grapes be ripe or not –  
What though their lawns be smooth as  
velvet,  
What though their cabbage beds be  
fine;  
The rich are rich, and cannot help it;  
Their catalogues are lists of wine.  
But ours (I should go on), but ours  
Are Mr. Sutton's choicest flowers;  
He chooses his asparagus  
And Photographs the best – for us;

He takes his morning walk, and fancies  
We might admire his famous pansies;  
Then to the minion camera man,  
Who walks behind him where he can,  
Sutton waves his stick, and sends  
A root of pansies to his friends.

Pansies, lilies, kingcups, roses,  
Please our eyes, if not our noses;  
Here, while winter rages, we  
Rest beneath a tea-rose tree,  
And while we button on our jerkins  
Think of the colour of Dorothy Perkins.  
Lawns that never need be mown  
Stretch themselves for us alone;  
Lettuces untouched by slug,  
Dahlias free from creeping bug,  
Beds that never need be weeded,  
Beds that never need be dug;  
All he saw we see as he did  
In Mr. Sutton's catalogue.

And is this all a dream?  
Alas, it is, as yet.  
Things are not what they seem.  
The lawn is very wet.  
The trees have shed their leaves  
In an untidy muddle,  
And, dripping from the outhouse eaves,  
The rain has made a dismal puddle.  
O my dear daughters true,  
My Barbara's and my Mary's,  
You doubt, and I agree with you,  
Mythology and fairies;  
Winter is winter, so you say,  
Cold mutton's but cold mutton,  
But unrelated uncles send  
This sound advice (here I should end):  
'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
And while ye mayn't, read Sutton.'

# Two Poems

## by Ruth Pitter

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### *WHAT OF MY JOY?*

**W**HAT of my Joy?  
See how she fades!  
While Grief, great growing boy,  
Devours, invades;  
He my whole having eats,  
She finds no food,  
And by my chimney sits  
In dying attitude.

When she is gone  
With Grief I'll dwell:  
When we are left alone,  
He, who can tell?  
May gentler grow, and be  
In my cold age  
A comforter to me,  
The wounds he gave, assuage.

Meanwhile I nourish both,  
The devourer and the dying;  
I am strong, I cast away sloth,  
And do but little sighing:  
See the sad purity  
Of the white sky and the stream!  
On these, and the winter tree,  
I will gaze, I will dream.

### *POOR*

**O** I AM become poor!  
There lacks for my mirth  
The weed beside the door  
And the twig on the hearth;  
There lacks for my food  
The cankered branch's yield,  
There lacks for my good  
Thin milk from the one field.  
O sour was the berry  
But eaten on a day  
When I could be merry  
And in the wood play;  
Could play without a penny  
Nor for penny care,  
The joys were so many,  
The ills were so rare;  
I combed all the brambles and  
Cared for no smart,  
For these thorns were in my hand  
And those are in my heart;  
So poor am I become  
That I could be content  
To find beneath that loam  
A narrow tenement.

# Barbarism

by Michael Dilke

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WE did not know anything about it the night before. We had been talking about it for so long that I thought it never would really happen. But on that day we heard the firing as soon as we woke up. I think I was woken up by the noise, though it was quite a long way away, at the other end of the town. My father and my elder brother James seemed serious and did not go down to the bank, but I had heard shots before and nothing ever happened. We had coffee as usual, but father told them not to unlock the front door or put back the shutters, and mother told them not to open even the shutters of the upper windows, so it seemed strange in the dark house and I began to think something might happen after all. Anyway it was different from an ordinary day.

After coffee we sat in the parlour and waited. The firing was still going on. My brother James had been to the Americas and had been in a revolution in Brazil, so he knew all about it and told us how to listen to the different kinds of shots. I could tell a machine gun easily from the rifles and bombs, but I could not tell the sound of a revolver. James said he could. My father said a great many people must be being killed,

but James said firing always sounded a lot but not many people were killed at the end. He said you heard firing all day and thought there could not be anybody left alive, and then in the evening they said one communist had been shot in the leg and a policeman had been hit with a brick but the only person killed was a woman who was looking out of a window. I laughed a lot, but nobody else did, so I stopped. My father said that all the same there was somebody looking along every one of those guns.

My mother and my two sisters sat on the sofa. My mother was sewing and I could see that she was praying too. My two sisters sat and looked in front of them. Mother sometimes looked at our picture of the Blessed Virgin, but my sisters did not seem to be looking at anything. Grandfather was sitting beside the stove. They had brought him down but he had not properly woken up yet. It was quite a cold day outside.

We sat there all the morning and nothing happened. James told us some stories about the revolution in Brazil. He said he knew a man there who was shot because he locked his front door. The revolutionaries said he must be against them because he locked it. So they took him outside

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and shot him. My father said there was something in that. He said all he wanted was to be on the right side of whoever was making a government, and anybody who was strong enough to make a government would be strong enough to get in at his door, whether he locked it or not. But my mother said: nonsense, if we opened the door anybody might come in, taking advantage of the trouble and the police being at the other end of the town, and if the communists won, only the Mother of God would be able to help us anyway. My father said he thought money would help more with revolutionaries, and James said he thought lead would be even better than gold. James had a revolver. My mother said they ought to be ashamed and afraid to talk like that when nobody knew how much longer they would have in which to repent. My mother was always very angry when they talked like that, but she was even angrier that day and they talked more like that than usual. My father knew communists would not take money, and James knew he could not do anything with one revolver if the police were all killed. But we had nothing to do, sitting there.

When it was time to get dinner ready mother went into the kitchen. Father had said cook and our maid could come and sit with us if they were frightened, but cook said she preferred to sit in the kitchen. When mother went in, cook said the maid had gone upstairs, but when they called she was not there. Cook said she had always thought the maid's young man was a communist. She said the maid was no good. So my younger sister

helped with the dinner and we ate it in the parlour. I ate a lot. The firing got much less after dinner, and I thought nothing more was going to happen, but I did not mind because we had heard such a lot and it had gone on for such a long time that I did not want to hear any more.

James went up and looked out of one of the windows to see if anybody was in the streets. He said nobody was. Father said the police must have beaten the rebels and before supper we would be able to go out and hear all about it. So we went upstairs to lie down. When I was in my room I peeped down through the slits in the shutter and while I was standing there I heard a whole lot of shots quite near. They seemed to be at the end of our street. Then I heard somebody running very fast on the pavement the other side of the street. I could not see because of the shutter, but they seemed to be running faster than I had ever heard anybody run before. I was excited and ran back into the passage. They were all shouting there. My father and my brother were arguing and my mother was trying to say something too. Father said it was wicked to try and use a revolver. He said they would shoot us all and who could blame them if we shot at them and James would be the murderer of us all by his wicked vanity in using it. While he was saying this James said our only hope was a last stand and perhaps aeroplanes would come and nobody could tell, but anyway we would all be killed if we let the rebels in. And my mother came up and took the revolver out of James's hand, ordering him to

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give it up to her as he owed his mother honour, and saying there could only be one use for a revolver now, and she trusted my father to do his duty. My father took the revolver, but he did not hold it as well as James did, and he said there was no need to talk like that for surely the Blessed Virgin would protect the innocent, and my mother and my sisters should be downstairs praying. My mother said they had prayed already and they would pray more, but it would be a good thing if other people prayed too. So we all went downstairs and knelt in the parlour and said prayers to the Blessed Virgin to save us from the communists. My elder sister looked very beautiful while she was praying. She looked like the Blessed Virgin, but more beautiful I thought. I listened to hear how near the shots were, because there had been such a noise with everybody shouting that I could not hear. James looked as if he was listening too, but we could not hear everything even then, because the others made such a noise praying. We could hear the shots easily, but I was listening for people running, and I thought I could hear shouting. Even grandfather said prayers very loudly, as he always did.

We said prayers a long time, and I wanted to go and listen behind the shutters in the front room. James got up and went, but mother looked at me, so I stayed. After a long time we heard a bang on the front door. We all got up and did not know what to do. We just stood there. Cook came in and stood there too. She wiped her hands on her apron. My father stood in the middle of the room. He

had put James's revolver in his pocket, but I saw him take it out and stuff it down behind the curtain. He was shaking so much that I did not know anybody really did shake like that. I was shaking too. My mother told my sisters to sit down on the sofa. She sat down with them and took up her sewing. Then we heard James shout out that he must let them in because they were knocking the door down anyway, and we could hear the wood breaking from where we were. We heard a shout and a sort of thump, and much sooner than we thought some men ran into the room very fast with bayonets out in front of them. One of them yelled to put our hands up and fired a shot which made such a noise that we all jumped up anyway, at least I suppose so, because we were all standing in a row up against the wall with our hands up. We thought they had shot somebody, but they only fired into the ceiling to frighten us. The shot made a smell in the room and a lot of plaster fell down. One of the pictures fell down too from the noise.

We stood against the wall and looked at them. They were looking at us. They were panting and looked very dirty. They kept looking round to see that nobody was behind them, and when they saw grandfather sitting by the stove they pushed him out of his chair and made him stand up too. They did not push him hard because they did not want him to fall down behind them. They seemed quite frightened. One of them went out into the passage and came back and said it was safe enough there, and I wondered what had happened to

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James. Then we all stood and looked at each other and the men stopped panting. They had red bands on their arms so we knew they were communists. There were four of them, and three of them had rifles with bayonets. The other one had a piece of iron pipe. One of the bayonets was bent and looked dirty, but the others were blue and very long. They looked frightening. I had never seen bayonets in a room before.

One of the men said suddenly: 'Who are you?' He was a big man and looked like a gypsy with big eyes and big brown hands and arms. He had the rifle with the bent bayonet and he stood in front of the others. The others looked like men I had seen sometimes at the other end of the town. They looked at us and did not say anything. I looked at my father, but he did not seem to be able to say anything, so mother said our name and said we had always feared God and given to the poor and were not afraid of anything anyone might do to us. The man said rude things and called my mother a name and said he had asked what work we did. So mother told him my father's position at the bank. When she said it they all said the word 'bourgeois' at once and began smiling. I heard a little noise and looked and saw it was my father's teeth knocking together. My mother said that anybody could see what sort of people we were by looking at us and by the house, but that made no difference because they could ask anywhere and they would not hear a bad word said about us. She said we would answer to any proper authority. The men took no notice,

but when she said about the house they all looked at the room and nodded. There was a glass cupboard full of china and another with a collection of medals my father had, and the men looked at them and looked at the other cupboards. They began to whisper together. They whispered a lot and seemed excited, and then we saw that they were all looking at us again, and they were looking at my sisters. They whispered again and they looked at me and one of them laughed. I heard one of them say 'outside'. They whispered more and looked serious and one of them looked at the walls and made an upward movement with his hands. I thought he was talking about burning the house. They all nodded and I could hear them saying: 'Yes, yes, yes'. They were so excited they kept laughing. At least three of them kept laughing. The other one looked rather stupid all the time. They had quite stopped panting and none of them seemed at all frightened any more.

When they had finished whispering the gypsy turned and said that we had admitted we exploited the workers and therefore we must be executed. But he said the communists were merciful and could bring up children in the proper way. When he said that they all laughed. The gypsy said that my father and mother and grandfather would be shot and cook could choose because she was really a worker. I was very pleased I was not going to be shot. Cook said she did not want to give herself airs and she had never reckoned herself more than a working woman, but if people like them were calling themselves workers she was sure she

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would be very glad to call herself a bourgeois, and they could do as they pleased. My mother took cook in her arms and kissed her on both cheeks, and cook said she was sure she did not want to give herself airs. Then my mother stood in front of the men and said we were ready for anything that might happen, but that my sisters were not children and would be shot with the others. She said they need not shoot me because I was the youngest and a child and perhaps God would have some consideration for them because of that mercy. But the gypsy called mother a dirty name again, and hit her in the face and he caught hold of my elder sister by her arm and her hair and told the others to drive us out of the house into the street and shoot us down if we tried to run away. My sister screamed and my mother caught hold of her by the waist and they pulled, the man holding her by the arms and my mother by the waist. Then my father ran forward and went on his knees in front of the gypsy and began begging him to spare us, and saying he would give him everything he possessed if he would spare us. While he was kneeling one of the other men pricked father behind with his bayonet and he jumped up and forward so quick that he ran into my elder sister so that the man let go of her to hit my father. My mother pulled my sister into the corner and my sister was screaming and crying and my younger sister was screaming too, and had been all the time. I thought it would be a good idea to get the revolver where father had hidden it behind the curtain, and see if I could shoot the gypsy with it, but while I was

thinking another man came into the room and began shouting too.

He had a revolver, and when the other men saw it and saw that he had a red band on his arm and shouted loudly, they stopped shouting and trying to drive people out with the bayonets and they tried to hear what he was saying. He was a young man and had a small black moustache and he looked nicer than the others. When we could hear him he was saying that he was an elected leader of the workers and he had a paper he could show them, and he demanded to know what was happening and why we were all shouting. The gypsy said quickly that everything was in order, he knew what he was doing and they did not need any help, they were just dealing with some exploiters and there was lots to do in other parts of the town. But my mother began speaking too, and she said she was sure the leaders of the people could not mean what was being done here. She said the gypsy and the other men had tried to seize my sisters and they were going to steal in the house, and even if we must be shot, stealing and worse was only done by very wicked men, and she was sure the young man was not a wicked man and God would reward him for saving the innocent. The gypsy hit at my mother, but the young man shouted at him and told him to stand back and the young man had a revolver in his hand so the gypsy stood back because his rifle with the bayonet was too long. The young man and the gypsy kept watching each other. The young man said that confiscating the property of bourgeois was not theft, because the possession of property was theft, but



## Michael Dilke

it must be done in the proper forms and the good name of the communist revolution preserved. He said the innocent would be saved because the workers were just, not because of God, because God was an invention of the bourgeoisie for keeping the workers in subjection. Then he said, had we any arms? My mother said quickly, no, we were harmless people who had been waiting to see what would happen. The gypsy said we were bourgeois, and what was a revolution for if we were not to be killed. He seemed very angry. My mother stood up in front of him and said everybody knew what he wanted and we could see it in his eye, and she pointed to my elder sister, who was crying in the corner. My sister looked very beautiful though she was crying and her hair was pulled, and the young man stood up straight and bowed to my mother and my sisters, though he kept watching the gypsy sideways. Then he made a speech. He said that the revolution was to establish the rule of liberty and equality and fraternity and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He said that because bourgeois justice was class justice many people who were now free would be tried by the workers according to the justice of the workers and if they were found guilty they would be shot. But only people who had fired on the workers would be shot without trial and he was satisfied we had not fired on anybody. Therefore we were quite safe and would come to no harm if we were innocent, but we must wait in the house till next day, when revolutionary tribunals would be set up and our case would be heard. And he said that we need not be afraid

because the broad masses of the workers would see to it that the good name of the communist state was not besmirched by looters and people who took advantage. Before he could finish the gypsy started cursing and said he was not going to be stopped from having his fun by a preaching boy, and he drew back his rifle with the bayonet to shoot or stab the young man. But he hesitated just a little because he thought the young man would be afraid and go, and the young man did not go, but caught the blade of the bayonet very quick with one hand and pushed it away from him, and with the other hand he shot the gypsy in the chest with his revolver. The gypsy stood up and then lay down and rolled over and looked up at me very hard with his eyes. Then he opened his mouth and was sick and the sick was blood, and I knelt down and was sick too, but not blood. When I looked up the young man was telling the other men to carry out the body of the gypsy, and the blood was running out of his hand where he had caught the blade of the bayonet. He looked very white, and he looked at his hand and went whiter. My mother and father were kneeling on the floor saying prayers, and the young man turned to them and tried to say something but could not. So he bowed and nearly fell down. He turned round to go but he walked into the door and caught hold of it and leant down and was sick. After that he stood still for a little and then went out slowly and we heard him go out of the front door.

I felt very ill, and my mother and sisters began to laugh and went on

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laughing and nobody could stop them, but father was all right, and he told cook to help them upstairs at once and then to clean up the blood and everything. I went away at first because I did not like to hear my mother and sisters laughing like that, but cook told me to help, so I brought some water from the kitchen and afterwards I felt better. I had never seen anybody shot before and I thought I should like it if they did not shoot me. And I thought I was too young to be shot. The only thing was we found James lying in the passage near the front door, and we thought the man must have hit him with the piece of iron pipe because he was bleeding from his head. And we found they had kicked him where they should not have kicked him, and he seemed very ill and could not understand, but he got a little better. We carried him upstairs and I helped.

When I was in my room I looked down through the shutters, and I could hear men marching up and down like soldiers. I pushed the shutter so that I could see them and they had red bands on their arms and rifles with bayonets. But they must have seen the shutter move because there was a shot quite close and the shutter and the window were broken over my head, and I fell down because of the noise and because I knew I might have been shot. I crawled away from the window on the floor and got into bed. When I was there I saw a hole in the ceiling and I wondered what father would say, but then I thought, and I did not think father would say much. Afterwards cook came and gave me some biscuits and some coffee. She said it was wicked anyone as young as I

should be in danger from wicked men, and she put her arms round me and cried a little and said she would sleep there with me if I was frightened, but I said I would rather be by myself. But I cried too because cook cried. So cook told me to pray to the Blessed Virgin and went away. Then I must have gone to sleep, though I don't know why because it was quite early, and when I woke up my mother was there, and she was white and looked very sad and she did not say anything, but I was so sleepy I went to sleep again. And I did not wake up till the morning.

That is all that happened that day. Next day, in the morning, I thought I would be able to tell everybody about how I had seen a man shot in our parlour, but then I remembered the revolution was not over and they might be going to shoot my father and mother, so I was very sad. I did not know what would happen to me. I felt I wanted some coffee, but it was still very early and I did not want to look out of the window. So I crawled about on the floor and looked at the plaster which had fallen down from the hole in the ceiling. Mother had not seen it in the evening because it was dark. When I had nothing more to look at I went out into the passage. I met cook, who said she had been up nearly all night helping look after James. She said if I wanted to be a help I could go and talk to grandfather. She said grandfather was so upset he kept wanting things and she was sure she would be grateful if I would get them or stop him asking. I asked cook for some coffee and she said now I had started too, but I

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could go down to the kitchen and get some biscuits and there would be coffee later. So I went down and put some biscuits in my pockets. In the kitchen I saw the carpet from the parlour which cook had brought there because of the blood. There was a lot of blood. I did not feel so hungry so I went to grandfather's room and after a little I ate the biscuits there. Grandfather talked a lot about the revolution and said it was because of religion and the king and the way they taught in the schools. He said he had never seen such a thing in all his seventy-six years, never, though he had been in the Americas. He said nobody could tell what would be the end of it, or what might have happened to our cousins who lived in the next street. So I ate the biscuits and after a little I thought it would be a good idea to tell grandfather about the shot in the ceiling of my room which had broken the window. So I told him and I said I was in my room when they started shooting at the window. He said it was shameful, and when my mother came in he told her they had been shooting at children too. My mother knelt down and took me in her arms and asked was I hurt. I said oh no, I could not have been hurt because they were shooting up from the street, but the window was broken. Then my mother kissed me and cried a little, so I knew it was all right about the hole in the ceiling.

Afterwards we had some coffee and I peeped into James's room. He had a big bandage round his head and he was saying something which did not mean anything. So I went down to the parlour and it looked very

strange with no carpet and my sisters were sitting there. I looked behind the curtain for the revolver, but it had been taken away. I began talking about the revolution, but my sisters looked very sad and important and kept saying prayers to the Blessed Virgin, so I stopped. I looked at the hole in the ceiling. It was not so big as the hole in my room and I wondered why. After I had wondered a long time I thought it was because the bullet in my room had been flattened out by the window. I was very pleased when I thought of that and I tried to tell my sisters, but they did not listen properly. So I listened to the shots and bangs in the town, but there were not very many. There was nothing else to do.

When it was about eleven o'clock we heard a funny noise in the town, at the other end of our street. It was a bang, but when I thought about it I thought it did not sound like an ordinary bang. It happened again, and I heard it better because it was nearer. There was a bang and then a shot very quick, and afterwards two more shots, and I thought the bang was a lot of shots together. I listened carefully to make sure if it happened again, but mother came in bringing grandfather and made a noise. She looked very frightening and I could see her hand was shaking when she tucked grandfather's rug. She looked at me and kissed me and I could feel her heart beating and then she kissed my sisters and looked at them. She went out but I heard father running down the stairs and they met and I heard them talking. I went nearer to the door to hear if they said what

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it was, and I heard father say something was impossible. He said he had looked, he had taken the looking-glass and looked, and there were sentries at every corner and patrols in the streets. Then they kissed, and after a little mother said the Blessed Virgin had saved us once and might save us again. Father came into the room and I looked as if I was just standing there, and just then we heard the funny noise again. Father listened, and he sat down on the sofa beside my sisters, and he was shaking in the same way as he had the day before. He tried to stroke my sisters' hair but his hand was shaking too much. So he just sat there and sometimes he shook a little and sometimes so much that he could hardly keep sitting on the sofa. I was very sorry for my father, and I went to try and comfort him, but he looked at me and his face was so different I was frightened and went away. When the noise came again he put his hand on his heart and got very white, and then he jumped up and ran round the room and he looked at the chimney and under the sofa. Then he knelt down and began to say prayers to the Blessed Virgin. My sisters said prayers too. I did not say prayers because the last noise had been very loud on the other side of the street, and I could hear it was shots and I wondered and I thought they must be shooting people. So I was wondering if they would shoot me, and I thought they might, so I knelt down and said prayers to the Blessed Virgin so that they would not shoot me. After that I said prayers so that they would not shoot father and mother and my sisters and grandfather and

cook. I thought James was safe because he was in bed. I thought I might go to bed too, but then I thought they would find me.

While I was saying prayers I heard three bangs on the front door and then a voice shouting. I could not hear what was shouted because father said prayers louder in a different voice and went on saying them. There were more bangs and more shouting. I thought I had said enough prayers, so I got up and went out into the passage, and there I heard crashes on the door. I was going back when I saw mother standing looking very still. Cook came out of the kitchen and wiped her hands and stood there too. I could hear that the front door was being cut down with an axe. After a little it split all down the wrong side and they pushed it open and came in. They were communists with rifles and bayonets like the other time and they aimed the rifles at us while they looked round carefully. They said we were to go into the parlour. I went and mother and cook came too. Two men came in and looked at us with the rifles pointing and did not say anything. They looked like workmen and they were very serious. We heard some others going upstairs. My mother said suddenly that her son was up there wounded, and she tried to go out but they pushed her back. So we waited and we heard the men upstairs. Then we heard James's voice and we heard them bringing him down. He could walk and he could say things, but they had nothing to do with what was happening. When he came in he was talking about a girl in Brazil. He had

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a big bandage with blood on it round his head, and the men had to push him straight when he walked. My mother ran to him and helped him down on to the sofa, and he went on talking about the girl in Brazil. He said her eyes were like stars and her hair was like a raven's wing. He said she was more an angel than a woman. But when he was still on the sofa he did not talk any more.

We all stood in a row except James and grandfather, who sat in his chair. One of the men said: had we any arms? My mother said no, but he came up and felt over every one of us. When he tried to feel over my sisters my mother and cook made such a fuss and a noise, saying it was shameful, that he did not feel much. He was very serious. He felt my pockets. I could smell that he smelt a lot.

When he had finished he went out and fetched some men we had not seen before. There were three of them and they had some papers and no rifles. They pulled over a table and sat down behind it on chairs and looked at us. Six men with rifles stood behind and beside them, so it was very hot in the parlour. One of the men on chairs stood up and read a paper saying this was a commission of the people set up by the victorious revolution to make domiciliary visits on class enemies and with powers to try, condemn, and execute its sentences. He was rather a small man with a thin face and spectacles and not much hair. I hated him. When he had read it all he asked us our names, and we had to tell him and he wrote them down. He asked us what work we did and wrote that down too.

While he was writing I looked at the men who were sitting with him. In the middle was a great big man with a red face like a butcher. He was fat and looked stupid and he kept biting his fingers. Sometimes he looked at my elder sister. When he had stared at her a little he looked at all of us too, but he did not look at us very long. He bit his fingers and stared at my sister again. The third man looked like a priest and when he spoke it was like a priest too. He had a round white face like a priest, but he was dressed like the others.

When the man with the wire spectacles had finished writing he read out my father's name and told him to step forward. My father stepped forward. He did not look frightened any more, and he was not shaking. But he did not seem to pay much attention and he kept saying prayers quietly to himself. I had never seen him look like that. Then I found I was crying and I did not want them to shoot my father and I wanted to beg them not to. But I knew it would be no use, and when I knew I could not do anything I cried more, and cook put her arm round me and I cried, leaning my face against her. I could not see, but I heard the man who looked like a priest saying that by communist law all officials in banks were guilty of exploiting the people. My father confessed and was known to be an official in a bank and therefore he was guilty of exploiting the people. All the others said: yes. He said that the punishment for exploiting the people was death, and he voted that my father should be condemned to

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death. The others said: yes. He told the man with spectacles to write it down, and he said the sentence would be carried out immediately by shooting. I thought they were going to shoot my father, so I looked to see, but they told him to go over to the side of the room. Then the man with spectacles read out my grandfather's name and told him to step forward. Grandfather sat there, and they said it again, so cook said it was a shame to drag an old gentleman about, but they made him stand up. They condemned him to death too. My mother said it was wicked to kill a harmless old man, and one of the workmen with the rifles asked if it really was right. The priest said it was. He stood up and made a speech and said that here as before they must be sure to clear their minds of all false pre-revolutionary ideas and carry out justice strictly in accordance with the principles of communism. Anyone who showed the so-called religious quality of arbitrary mercy was suspect of being a class-enemy. The workman said he had only interrupted in order to be sure that it was true communism, and now he was quite satisfied. The priest told the man with spectacles to write the sentence down. Grandfather just listened and did not say anything. The man with spectacles read out my mother's name. They condemned her to death too. When they said it she started to cry and begged them to spare her for the sake of her children. The priest said her children would not need her. She knelt down and said he looked as if he had once served God and she begged him to remember God's mercy.

The priest told the men with rifles to take her away, but my father raised her up and kissed her and told her not to fear, for presently we would be together in the peace of Heaven. She stood with him, and my father comforted my mother. The man with spectacles wrote it down and read out my brother James's name and told him to step forward. James had his eyes shut and did nothing. They told the workman to bring him. One of them tried to wake him quite gently, but as soon as they moved him he began talking about the girl in Brazil. He said it was all very well and in our town he had always been considered as good a man as any, but there was a limit to everything and it was not decent, it was not Christian, to go on in such a way. That seemed to make the workmen laugh and the fat man sitting down laughed too. One of the workmen whispered, and the priest said sharply that they should leave James alone. But the workmen moved him again, and he said: no, frankly he did not like it, and if she did it again she would feel the weight of his hand. At that all the men laughed more and more and the fat man thumped his fist on the table and said he had never heard such a good joke. Cook said it was a wicked shame to make mock of a wounded man, but they would have gone on if the priest had not jumped up and said they were bringing disgrace on communism, and he ordered them to go back to their places. One of the men said he was sorry if they had done anything contrary to communism and they left James, but they looked as if they would have liked to go on laughing.

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Instead they condemned James to death. My mother said they could not murder a wounded and delirious man, but the priest asked if she could explain why a man should escape justice because he had resisted justice. He said James deserved death if possible more than the rest of us, and it was only because of the extreme care of communists for order that he had not been killed outright on the spot. The men said: yes, yes, that was right and just, and all capitalists must be killed, because that was communism. The man with spectacles read out my elder sister's name and told her to step forward. She went forward a little way and stood there. She had her handkerchief to her mouth and she did not look up. She had dark marks all round her eyes and they showed a lot because she was so pale, but she still looked beautiful because her eyelashes came down over them a little and because she was so beautiful all over. They condemned her to death, and I was frightened because I thought they might condemn me too, but when the priest asked the others if they agreed about her, the fat man leant and whispered to him. The priest seemed angry, and he said that if the fat man had any remarks to make he should make them aloud, so that everyone could hear. The fat man went a little redder and looked as if he would not say anything, but then he mumbled and said he had only suggested that this girl had done no harm and was very pretty and young, and it seemed a pity to kill anyone so pretty. After a moment the workmen said: yes, yes. But the priest jumped up and shouted and

said: what did they think they were there for? He said he had said already that morning again and again that communism condemned class enemies without mercy. Any bourgeois-tainted minds left in existence would be a source of reactionary infection and counter-revolution. He said communist justice had nothing to do with youth or prettiness. Did they think the communist state wanted harlots? And it was wrong to say this woman had done no harm. She had been a parasite on the workers since she was born. He asked what work she had done. Of course she was pretty. She had pretty hands, white with idleness. He demanded her condemnation in the name of communism. The men said it was all quite true, and they agreed as long as they were assured it was communism. So the priest told the man with spectacles to write it down. My sister was trembling and crying, and I cried again too, and while I was crying I heard grandfather start speaking. He banged his hand on the arm of the chair and said suddenly that he had never seen such barbarism in all his life. He said he had lived seventy-six years in this country and also in the Americas, and never had he seen such barbarism. They could call it communism or socialism or anything else they liked, but to murder men and women and children and old and wounded people who had worked hard and lived good Christian lives was first and foremost barbarism. Then he stopped and we could hear him breathing hard because he had spoken very loudly and he was angry.

At first nobody said anything.

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When they had thought the men began to say: yes, there could be no doubt that it was barbarism. One of them said he had thought so several times, but had thought he must be wrong because he was told it was communism. The priest sat in his chair and looked round at them. Then he got up and began to make a speech again. He said what he had said before all over again and took a long time and all the men listened very carefully. He ended by saying that anything previously considered barbarism was right if it was in accordance with communist principles and in the cause of communist justice. The men nodded, but one of them asked if he properly understood the priest to say that it was barbarism after all. The priest looked at him for a moment and then said: no, it was not barbarism. The men said nothing so the priest told the man with spectacles to write the sentence down. While he was writing the fat man mumbled and said it was all very well, but the plain fact was that to kill a pretty young girl who had done nothing wrong was barbarism. You could not get away from that. All the workmen agreed with him loudly and began talking at once. They said that not only killing young girls but killing women at all was barbarism, especially respectable women and old people and to kill wounded men was the plainest barbarism. They said one woman had had a saintly look when they shot her, and that to ignore the prayers of little children must be barbarism and no good could come of it in this world or the next. When they spoke of the next world the priest jumped up on a chair

and screamed at them so loudly that they stopped talking and listened. And he said all over again what he had said before, and said that religion was a snare invented by the capitalists to subdue the minds of the workers and they knew that very well. He said that barbarism was the way the capitalists treated the workers, and they must do their duty and condemn every capitalist they could find, just as they must clear their minds of bourgeois prejudices. The men agreed and said they had forgotten for the moment that it was communism, but now they would waste no more time but hunt down the capitalists and kill them. Only the fat man thought, and said that they were not condemning capitalists, they were condemning a very pretty little girl. One of the workmen said he was quite right and it was barbarism. The priest began speaking again, but while he was speaking one of the men went out of the room. He came back quickly with a jug of water from the kitchen and came forward with it quietly so as not to interrupt and offered it to my mother, saying that he hoped it would help the young lady who had fainted. I looked and saw my elder sister had fainted because she was frightened and it was so hot and there was such a noise. When the priest saw what the man had done he threw up his hands, and then said something to the man with spectacles. This man stood up and said the commission had finished its work for the present and would continue later. He said we were to consider ourselves prisoners and remain in the house. Then the priest told the workmen



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to go out. They all went, and we were left alone.

I felt so tired I went and sat down. My mother lay on the sofa and sobbed. James was still. Cook was supporting my elder sister and crying over her and my younger sister was crying over her too. Only my father seemed all right, and he knelt and thanked the Blessed Virgin for preserving us, and then came and helped everybody.

My father said in the evening that we ought to get out of the house by the back when it was dark and go to our cousins in the next street. He said the Blessed Virgin had preserved us twice in our house and had granted us a plain warning that we were not safe there. So he led us all out and along the back street, when we had seen

the patrols had gone away. We could hear firing again far off, and father said we should pray it was soldiers coming. James talked all the time and I had to carry some things while they supported him, but I saw three bodies in the street. Two were all right, but I could see that one had not much head left. Cook said it was barbarism, but I thought perhaps a bomb had done it. James had told me what bombs did. We got to our cousin's house without meeting anyone, but they were not there. The front door was broken down and they had been taken out and shot against the wall in front of the house. They were still there, but it was dark so we did not see them till the morning, when the soldiers came.

# A Bit of Her

## by Ethel Colburn Mayne

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**T**HOUGH the Court was in mourning, I don't think any woman at Mrs. Lambert's party need have conformed if we hadn't all known how gratifying that would be to our hostess. Accordingly we wore black or white or grey, except one girl, Felicia Waring, who more than most might have been expected to show that she knew what was what—this, because her 'man' had in the past been something diplomatic, and was mightily insistent on his something. But there she was, conspicuous in rose-colour. The frock being a masterpiece, she would anyhow have struck the eye; thus success was turned into disaster by the general effect of gloom. Merely to look wistful might have passed; to look nervous was fatal; and that was what she was looking—with reason as things were, but reason doesn't help towards the kind of salvation needed at parties.

For Secretan to keep away from her was one thing, and not a new thing; he often neglected her in public. Everyone was aware that they were lovers, but everyone was supposed to be unaware; for him that added a spice, and she knew and didn't mind—could even savour it herself. But for him to keep away from her with the woman whom that evening he never left—this was another thing. This was

torment, and the conspicuous frock made the torment worse. When his emptied glance did fall on her, she could fill it with the anger that may or may not have been there, but that she was sure to put there, being what she is and as she was that night.

The rooms were crammed and hot, and noisy with the desolating din of such gatherings, for me the most panic-making sound there is. No one would hear a word I said; I should have to talk with men who, looming above me whether I sat or stood, would seem to wish they had come upon anybody else; while I, wishing likewise with the qualification that anybody else would have been quite as bad, would have to gaze up in their faces as if my one ambition was to keep them there. Felicia's view of monster-parties is different as can be from this; they are to her as the trumpet to the war-horse of Scripture. But not that night. That night, her panic transcended mine by every form of misery the heart can know.

Making my escape (early, as such occasions go), I came upon her and Secretan, together at last in an ante-room. The encounter was clearly unwelcome to him, and to her, if at any moment welcome, now being turned into a martyrdom. Her eyes were

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blind with tears – I got past as quickly as I could. But she called to me.

‘Wait, I’ll take you home. I’m going this minute.’

I was hardly inside the cloak-room before she did come, eyes still swimming. ‘Give it,’ she murmured, pushing her ticket into my hand. Her cloak was brought, we hurried out.

She didn’t go beyond the wet eyes and a small sob. I put my arm about her, we said nothing, and we drove like that the long way to her home. I was to take the car on; getting out, she said: ‘I’ll tell you some day what I do on nights like this.’

It was twenty years before she told me. We ought both to have been sensible women by that time; but if one has ever been the reverse of sensible, I have a notion that one goes on being it as long as one lives. Aware of it, though – the difference that makes the difference.

Felicia, for whom growing old is a spectre that rattles its chains from morning till night, is fond of decking the chains with garlands from such poets as have gloated on the winter of womankind – Villon, Ronsard, and their ‘*jadisseries*,’ as I have made her laugh by saying. But Ronsard’s Helen, for instance, was to be alone beside the fire on a winter night, regretting him and all that she had never given him; while when Felicia told me what she ‘used to do,’ we were in a London roof-garden on a summer night, regretting perhaps but without the corollary, and it wasn’t Ronsard’s Helen we were talking of, but Rossetti’s – the Sister with the waxen man that she was

melting, and the inquisitive little brother who wanted to know why.

‘I’ve done that,’ Felicia said. ‘It was a waxen woman, though. I’ve got it still. I’ll show it to you if you like.’

I liked, and she went through the big window into the house and up the stairs to fetch her waxen woman, drifting in grey muslin, silver-shod, as she ought to have been at that party – and how it suited her! Better even than the rose-colour had, or might have.

‘I bought the box on purpose for it,’ she said, returning. ‘Provençal olive-wood. Beautiful little box.’

Beautiful little box indeed – slender, dark, dimly gleaming; and in it an object brown as the smooth wood, but shrivelled like a chestnut-kernel stripped and then forgotten. It looked hot with an old dead hotness that was sickening. One seemed to feel a searing breath; the featureless face gave out, somehow, so human a sense of outrage suffered. Even a nursery-doll scorched brown is piteous; this unhappy thing in the narrow box that was too long for it, stiff-armed, stiff-legged, and naked – well, I knew that if I wanted to, I might make fun of it. Felicia wouldn’t mind.

I didn’t want to. With my repulsion was mingled something that felt absurdly like reverence. Before us, after all, lay a symbol of anguish – outlived indeed, but once made concrete in that abject doll. I pictured Felicia come home (to this same house) on the nights when he had scarcely spoken to her – ‘nights like this,’ as she had said – kneeling before the fire, her fingers pushing in the pins that were to carry death, with death in her own

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heart and only hate for comfort. And even the hate so childish.

'It didn't melt,' I said at last, idiotically.

'No, and she didn't die. He married her.'

'That needn't have stopped the magic,' I said, and was ashamed of myself when she answered: 'I thought it would be mean to go on. It might have worked in time – one couldn't tell. He was tired, wanted a wife. It ought to have been me, but it wasn't.'

I knew that after Secretan's death Felicia and his widow had made friends. I said: 'You see her sometimes, don't you?'

'Yes. We talk of him. She knew about me, of course.'

Who didn't! There had been many a lover since and many a tale, but Felicia hadn't married. The many had been as faithless as this first one, the only one for whom such jealousy had worked in her. ('I didn't know anything about men when he got hold of me,' she says, explaining that.)

Not until now had she spoken of the night that I had all along been thinking of.

'My pink frock! I had forgotten about the mourning. When he did speak to me – I waylaid him, going to get her an ice – he looked me up and down and said: "Why can you never behave like other people?" I cried, and he went back to her.'

'I remember your driving me home.'

'Did I? I burnt her that night. Look, you can see the pin-marks' – she lifted the doll from the box. 'It was hard work to get them in, because she

wouldn't melt. And now she's got so fat – she melts all the time.'

I asked her why she kept the thing.

'It's a bit of me. I'm in it now, instead of her. The hours I spent making it! Crying at first, and then I got interested and forgot why I was doing it. Not badly modelled, you know – the shoulders.' She held it to me that I might admire the shoulders, then laid it back in the box. 'Here's Williams with our drinks. . . . On the table. I'll take this off.'

I saw the maid's eyes follow it; Felicia saw too.

'You remember that, don't you, Williams?'

The old servant, Felicia's appanage as long as any of us have known her, smiled at me as if to ask my indulgence for her mistress. 'I do indeed, Miss Felicia,' she said; and in her voice, behind the crooked smile, there stirred as it were a long-dead anger. She stood gazing down into the box: 'That Mr. Secretan!' she cried, and went away.

Her bowed back, as she passed through the window, seemed loaded with memories rather than with years. She looked like the witch, potentially potent, that Felicia hadn't been. 'But Williams would have melted Secretan,' thought I. The venom in her voice, the flame in her dark eyes that peered into the box where lay the burnt, the burnt-out fierceness of that love and jealousy and hate – they gave me, as I watched her creep downstairs and remembered the brisk housemaid I had early known, a sense not of time, but timelessness. All the fond, scandalized compassion, all the shrewd prescience in the heart and mind of Williams who

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then was young and now was old, had lived again a moment; it was as though her mistress and she might kneel to-night before the fire to melt the waxen woman.

From far away, as it were, I heard Felicia saying: 'Poor old thing, she never has forgiven him. Knew all about it, I used to cry so.'

I pulled myself together. 'And did she help you with your magic?'

'Often, if she was up when I came in. "I'd sooner be melting *him*," she always said. North-country, like me, so she believed in it. The girls all do it there when their men are unfaithful.'

Once Felicia gets on her North-country, you don't easily get her off it. She forgot drinks and doll; we lost ourselves in wildernesses of superstition, legend, lawless living and dying and killing, until the sense of Time came back to me, and I declared that it was time for me to go.

'Drinks first, though,' said she. 'We want them after all that.'

Her grey cat just then sauntered out to the roof-garden. 'Here's Galli-Curci.' She picked up the feathery thing that looked like a bit of her gown. Its golden eyes, resentful, gazed anywhere but at her – the cat's ineffable trick, so consciously expressive of apartness from the outward submission.

Still with Galli in her arms, Felicia went to the table.

'You won't be able to manage both,' I said, laughing in anticipation of the struggle.

'I'll try, though!'

The hiss of the syphon settled that. Galli broke from her arms, was on the ground, was smelling at the olive-wood

box, in another moment had dragged out the doll.

'Look!' I exclaimed. With that absorbed curiosity which makes us, usually, smile at an investigating cat, this one had turned the thing over on its face. 'Do let me take it from her!' I cried again, for it was – not shocking, but hurting me. I stooped.

'No, don't,' Felicia said. 'Why mayn't she have her little game.' Then, pouring out our drinks at the table with her back to the little game, 'Any news from your enemy?' she asked me, who had of late been sorely aggrieved by another woman. No affair of the heart, a mere business-matter.

'There won't be any,' I said absently. 'Unless of her death – then there may be a hope.'

'Can't we poison her?'

I didn't answer. I was still watching Galli; so was Felicia now, with the look she has for anything a cat does. Who hasn't felt the vile beauty of that long tormenting? This was nothing but a lump of wax, yet again I cried: 'Do stop it!'

Felicia hadn't heard; she too was repeating herself. 'Can't we poison her?'

'This beast of yours?' said I. 'Just now I feel inclined to.'

'No, your old woman.' She came to me with my drink. 'Poor Galli – but listen! An idea. Let's make *that* your enemy. I'll light a fire and stick pins in this very night. Shall I?'

As I took the glass she held to me, I looked up in her face. Aware or unaware, which was she? I looked away, I felt a queer constriction of the heart. The difference that makes no

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difference. . . . Galli had got bored, eyes still bright with eagerness. I  
was gone; the doll lay, staring feature- waited an instant. No, I couldn't say  
less, between us. it.

'Shall I?' Felicia said again, her So: 'Yes - do,' I said.

# Forgive and Forget

by C. Day Lewis

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JOHN's father was dying in the next room. It would not be long before the nurse put her head round the door and beckoned him. There would be a lucid interval just before death, John had been told; then his father would die. After that he did not expect to see him again. That was the real difficulty. Every year, when he had revisited his old home, he had left it again thinking: 'Well, next time perhaps it will be better; next time it will come right.' And now there was to be no next time. This was the last chance. He could hear the landing clock ticking, slowly and deliberately bringing him nearer to the point at which he would have to make a move.

How could that be done, when his heart still felt, as it had felt for so many years in this house, at a standstill? Not shut out from love; not even, as once, striking against the other's excess of love. It was not that he was incapable of it. He knew himself to be warm-hearted, and faithful in his affections. Two of his best friends had died young. He could still remember that winter morning years ago: the telephone bell ringing: the voice speaking from the editor's office: 'Eden, C. F. Eden, the cricketer; that's your friend, isn't it? We've just had a telegram to say he died suddenly yesterday.' How the blood seemed to run all out of him;

how the whole world suddenly withdrew and left him alone, walking about for hours in an amazement of grief. Yes, Christopher and Pauline had both gone away like that; slipped off as it were in a moment while he was looking the other way, and hidden themselves for ever. There had not been time to say good-bye to either of them. They had left quickly, John reflected; got up early and gone, as though to spare him the added pain of seeing them off. But to-day there was to be no such escape; there would be time for saying good-bye, too much time.

Travelling up in the train, he had thought: 'It must be all right now. This coldness in my heart is only the shock at hearing the news. When I see him dying before me, surely then I shall be able to melt and feel as I ought to feel.' He had gone into his father's room. The stage was set. All the properties of death were ready to hand. The chief actor was there, waiting for the last lines before his final exit. But John realised with mounting desperation, as he gazed on that familiar face, that he himself could not sustain the scene: he would not be able to live his part, only to act it. It would have simplified things, perhaps, if his father had been suffering. Pity might have reopened that long-disused line along which love used so powerfully to run.

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Pity, sympathy – repulsion, even – would be better than this creeping paralysis of indifference which by now possessed him from heel to head.

But his father was in no pain. He was lying unconscious, looking almost his everyday self unless it was for a certain grotesque elongation of the features as of shadows in the late evening. For the present he was railed off invisibly from human contact; far more effectually than in churches those bronze and marble effigies of the substantial dead. Soon, however, he would come awake. Life would make the last desperate spurt towards the end of its hopeless race. Those eyes would open, and John would be called in to pass their examination. And he could not give the right answer: he was bound to fail. Now, waiting next door, his mind hurried back over the past, hunting for the right answer, as one imprisoned in a stone room frantically feels round the walls for the secret spring, before air and breath give out.

Outside, on the landing, the grandfather clock still wheezed from time to time, but this was of no significance. The bed, the armchair, the yellowish washing-stand and towel-horse, the minute bunches of roses on the wallpaper which in illness he had never been able to stop trying to count – everything here was familiar from boyhood. Once they had meant security at night, and in the morning light had stood out clear, the starting-point of discovery and joy. Now they were like family talk, a blur of common-places. They had nothing to tell him. They could give him no help. It was long ago his father had said: 'If any-

thing happens to me, mind you don't have any of those morbid hymns the parishioners wallow in. A glorious anthem, like——' but John had forgotten the name of the anthem. Then his aunt had said: 'I don't think hymns of any sort are suitable at funerals, do you, John?' She was always asking impossible questions. Her mind had been made up for her many years before to deal with every conceivable point of conduct that might arise, so it made no difference whether one answered yes or no. At any rate he had not answered on that occasion, he remembered, because he was occupied with the realization that he was entirely and shockingly unmoved by the prospect of his father's death. Sometimes, as a boy, at moments of injustice or frustration, he had wished him dead. Once even he had sobbed out, 'I'd like to kill you.' But this indifference was much worse – to be neither glad nor sorry at the thought. No, that conversation could not have taken place so very long ago, he reflected. On internal evidence. For it was not so very long ago – not more than ten years, perhaps – that he had ceased being irrationally irritated by his father's circumlocutions; and he remembered that 'if anything happens to me' had not irritated him then.

Yes, even those old, ridiculous irritations were preferable to the present anæsthesia. They were at least signs of life; proofs that blood-relationship was not dead. His adolescence had not been particularly happy. The early death of his mother had turned the full current of his father's love upon him, and the strain had often been



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more than he could bear. It was all right when he was a small boy, uncritical, his father's hero worshipper, able to use up all the love that was radiated upon him. But later, adolescent, when the inevitable time came for withdrawal from the charmed circle and the construction of his own world, then he had experienced a terrible struggle. For his father, driven like himself by blind impulse, though an opposite one, had disputed every inch of that withdrawal. Prickly adolescence put out all its spines; and love, wounding itself upon them, yet unerringly had turned him over again and again to find the soft spot. A horrible conflict, but, considering the characters of the two, a necessary one. Though, being more self-critical, he was perhaps better able than his father to understand its nature, he had long ceased to feel ill-will about it. Adolescence was bound to be unhappy. If you didn't get it one way you got it another.

The irritations he had felt later had only been relics and survivals of that conflict, the random shots fired by still nervous combatants after armistice is signed. Then they too were silenced, and nothing remained. Nothing came to take their place. For the new relationship was an empty one as far as he was concerned, an affair of comings and goings that were never meetings and partings, of chat about cricket teams and tobaccos. Did his father realize, as he did, how one-sided it was? Did he, too, feel that it was vainer than the appeals of a ghost to a man, futile as the reaching-out of the living to the fugitive dead? This was different from the natural reorientation between

parent and child grown adult. There should still be a live cable of sympathy between them, though they are now separate continents. But it had snapped. Or he had lost his end of it. He must find the break and mend it. That still figure in the next room demanded it: an unspoken, last request. And time was growing short, time was growing short. Very soon now his father would pass into the state that cancels all responsibilities and says to succour: 'Too late. You have come too late.'

Clearly some great wrong had been done: melted now from the surface of consciousness, but a poisonous deposit had been left and sunk deep in. Poisoning the wells. One ought, after all, to love one's father. If only I could find the poison I could have it expelled . . .

'As I say, I could have you expelled, Peile. You realize the seriousness of your offence, I hope—' John began to cry. 'But the headmaster and I have decided, as you did not play the leading part in these occurrences, that you shall be given another chance.'

John's housemaster was speaking. An earnest, inadequate man: the one who always told the boys he was preparing for Confirmation that the Trinity was like an eight rowing in a boat. But he was doing his best to be fair and kind.

'Thank you very much, sir,' John gulped.

'The only way you can thank us is by making up your mind to keep right out of this sort of thing in the future. You see, we have great hopes of you.'

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Some day, perhaps, you will be Head of the House. You won't let us down again, will you?"

This was too much. John broke into a paroxysm of sobbing.

'Cheer up, old man. It's over and done with now. You run along. Go into the drawing-room for a bit, if you like. There's no one there.'

But it was not over and done with, John knew that only too well, unless – As he reached the door, he turned and made an agonized effort to control his voice.

'Please, sir. Are you going to – need you tell my father?'

The housemaster's face stiffened. Was the boy a quitter after all. 'Why of course your father must be told. I think it would be best if he heard of it first from you. Yes, I would like you to write to him to-night. You have been very straightforward with me. Surely you would not want to conceal it from him, John?'

O God, wouldn't I? But it's no use. I can't explain.

He went away and wrote the letter. The next day he felt ill. The matron saw him and sent him up to the sick room. He had measles. Another boy, Ryder, was there. He had caught the disease the day before. Ryder looked at him with something like awe. 'Well, you're starting young, aren't you?' he said when John had got into bed. 'It's all right. You needn't look so surprised. It's all round the house. Fenner smuggled me up a note this morning. We're not supposed to read with this bloody disease, but who cares? A hell of a fine row, isn't it? Edgerton's going to be bunked. Come on! Cheer up! Are we downhearted?

Fenner says he heard Grey say you'd come through it with flying colours.'

When John was allowed to read, his father's letter was brought to him. It had been bad enough before, but this was far worse. The worst thing that had ever happened. 'Here's a letter for you, Peile,' said the nurse, 'such a lovely, fat one. A regular budget. I wish I got love-letters like this. Well, aren't you going to open it? You really *are* a funny boy.' John opened the letter, a forlorn hope nerving his fingers.

'My dearest boy,

'Your letter came yesterday. I have heard from Mr. Wynwood to-day that you are down with measles. I am praying for your speedy recovery. You can imagine what an anxious time this is for me. Your letter was a terrible blow to me. That my own son, my only son, should have allowed himself to take part in such horrible things – I just can't understand it. You know how all my hopes were centred in you. Ever since your mother died I have lived for you alone: and now I feel I can't look people in the face. Some day, perhaps, you will understand what a father's love is, what a thing like this means to him. I do not want to reproach you: I feel too heartbroken for that: and I gather from your housemaster's letter that you were more sinned against than sinning: Some fathers might act very differently. In fact several people, whom there is no need to name, have told me in the past that I have not been strict enough with you. But that is my way. I may have been wrong, but I always wanted to be your pal as well as your father. This is what hurts me

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most – that you shouldn't have told me about it before. I noticed, of course, last holidays that you were not the same as you used to be. In the old days there were no secrets between us, and now there was something. I felt it very much, but I kept silence. As I say, I won't reproach you: for I hope I have nothing with which to reproach myself. After all, I did warn you of these dangers before you went to Chiltern.' ('So that's what he was talking about in the lounge of the station hotel the day he first brought me to school,' thought John, 'and I never understood. How could I know?') . . . 'I shall say no more about this. You will find the same old Dad when you come home in April. He forgives you. The thought of how you have hurt him will be punishment enough. If it had been anything else – but this dirty, disgusting business. It has broken my heart . . .'

John pushed the letter away from him under the bedclothes. He couldn't read any more. Every sentence was a fresh, deliberate murder.

Yes, thought John, remembering all this without indignation thirty years later, he forgave me; but my soul never forgave him that vital wound. I was so young. I still believed literally everything he said. I really believed I had broken his heart. A petty incident it might seem now, a rudimentary pain. But for the child pain, fear, grief are total eclipses of his life, and like the savage he feels that it will never be light again. Do not dare, man or woman, to ask one of these to bear your griefs and carry your sorrows: a single tear weighs

down his heart to the dust, and the cobwebs you brush aside so easily are his calamities. As John mused, two more pictures moved up into place. . .

It was winter. He had been having tea with friends on the far side of the common, three miles from home. The afternoon had been misty, but it was not till he mounted his bicycle outside the house that he realized how thick the fog had become. Still, he had been that way many times before. He knew the way with his eyes shut. It was only a matter of going slowly and carefully. He would have an adventure to tell his father when he got back. Blindfold navigation: the lone rider wins home. He turned on his lamp and pedalled off. The house was gone from behind him. In front, his light faltered and faded against the cold comfort of the fog. Still, he knew the way. There was no chance of his getting lost. For five minutes he pedalled on. If only there were trees along these roads he could have something to recognize. But there were no trees; only the road and the grass. Surely one oughtn't to be going uphill already. Oh, damn! Oh, please let me be on the right road. There are so many little roads on this common: how do I know if I'm on the right one? They all feel the same under one's tyres. John's heart shrank, and the fog crawled in closer upon him. He compelled himself to be sensible. There are times when even the brave man must retreat. He would turn round and go back to his friends – borrow a stronger lamp: or perhaps Mr. Johnson would come with him.

But now even the road turned

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traitor. It grew and multiplied like nightmare vegetation, throwing off shoots to right and left. At first he tried to remember: soon he gave up and hurried down this road or that at random. It was all the same: no lights ever appeared in front. At last he stopped. And, as though he must admit the demon fear before he could exorcise it, he forced himself to say quite clearly, out loud, 'I am lost'. But there was a more painful fear stirring within him, worse than being lost, so much worse that he did not yet dare to formulate it.

The labourer who found him sitting motionless by the roadside twenty minutes later, rode home with him. The boy had been glad enough to see him, but soon he grew distraught, as though his trouble was not over and done with at all. Indeed, John was wishing himself still lost rather than found.

'What's the time?' he asked, after a long silence.

'Near eight, son. Date with a lady friend?'

'No. It's just - my father may be getting anxious about me.'

'That's right,' said the man, entirely puzzled.

'Well, here we are. You can find your way now, can't you? I'll be getting along. Fog's clearer this side of the common.'

'I - I wonder would you mind coming with me - just to the end of the drive.' John was past all shame now.

'That's all right, son. Makes you a bit nervous, getting lost, I dare say.'

They came to the end of the drive.

'Perhaps he won't,' thought John, knowing that he was deceiving himself. The moment the gate whirled open his father began to shout from the top of the drive: 'Who's that? Is that you, John? Where have you been? Answer me.'

John turned despairingly to his guide. 'Look here. Could you just come up for a minute and tell him what's happened. Perhaps he'd listen to——' But the man, intimidated by those formidable tones, was already wheeling his bicycle away, throwing a 'Good luck, son,' over his shoulder.

John set his teeth and walked up the drive. His father was shouting, shouting, beside himself. He followed John to the bicycle shed, shouting at him, and back to the front door.

'Where have you been? Why are you so late? We've been expecting you back hours ago. What on earth——'

'It was the fog. I——'

'You should have started back earlier. You should have let us know. Your aunt and I have been nearly killed with anxiety.'

'But I couldn't let you know. The Johnsons aren't on the telephone, and there's no house near——'

'I can't help that. Something could have been done if you'd wanted to. What time did you start back?'

'I don't know. About half-past six.'

'Don't speak to me in that sullen way. You've no right to be so late. Why didn't you start earlier? What have you been doing all this time?'

'I got lost. I've been trying to tell you, only you won't listen.'

John was stung out of his fear and

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misery. A stubborn pride refused to let him appeal for pity. His father's voice bawled and cracked and quavered: he was almost blubbing.

'Don't be rude. Don't dare to take that tone with me. You couldn't have started at half-past six. The fog's not as bad as all that.'

'It's much worse the other side of—'

'I will not be interrupted. You're always getting back late from the Johnsons. You're always slinking off over there.' His father's voice changed to querulous self-pity. 'Yes, your own home is not good enough for you. Well, if you prefer these friends of yours to me, that's that. Let it be so. I'll take a back seat from now on. My feelings don't matter. It's obviously nothing to you that your father has been standing out here for an hour, waiting for you, sick with anxiety. You never thought of that, did you?'

John's mouth twitched. He could not control it any longer. He began to weep, bitterly and hopelessly. Not so much because he had been lost and had behaved like a coward: nor even at his father's unspeakable injustice; but because the man he had for so many years worshipped and relied on, his second self, his father, had somehow betrayed him — had for the first time appeared puny and contemptible in his eyes . . .

And then again. Five years later. Not long after he had gone into business. He had known Stella Johnson since boyhood. She was his first friend, receiving all that flow of life which at home had been choked and driven underground. Two years ago

he had fallen in love with her physically too. This change of relationship was difficult for them both, but weighed upon Stella with a special heaviness, for she had a deep apprehension, not uncommon among girls brought up with a number of brothers, that she was sexually cold. John felt this, but had not the equipment to deal with it. So the last two years had been a pretty miserable time for them both: though they both knew what the change between them meant, he was too shy to advance without encouragement, while she did not dare to make the first move towards a contact which she feared would prove a failure. So they decided tacitly to go on as they were, and last holidays their rooted constancy seemed to have justified itself. John's dammed-up passion at last broke through his timidity and frustration: he took the initiative, and they became lovers. After they had parted, however, a terrible reaction set in for the girl. Her awakening, perhaps, had been too sudden and unexpected: at all events, she felt the last few weeks had no more authority than a dream, and the reflex seemed to draw her further away from John than she had ever been. Impulsively she wrote to him, saying that she was certain now she could never marry him, and that it would be fairer for both of them never to see each other again.

For John this letter was devastation: as though a condemned man, at the last moment reprieved, was told that a mistake had been made, and he must die after all. He had the single-minded passion for the beloved of one without marked personal ambition and without any other relationship into

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which that passion may overflow. Her letter did not in the least check or divert the stream of his love. He knew he would love her always. And now this, the sole object and necessary fulfilment of his life, had declared itself out of reach. It was while he was sitting in his room, biting the hard cushion to prevent himself crying out loud, white-faced, drained of everything but despair, that his father, who was passing through the town, came in for a short visit.

'You're not looking very well, John. Are they feeding you all right here?'

'Oh! yes; yes, thanks.' (Shall I say: 'Half an hour ago I was condemned to be buried alive?') They talked trivialities for a few minutes. Then his father said: 'How do things stand with you and Stella now? Do we take it that you are definitely engaged? It is nice to share one's happiness sometimes.'

'I'm afraid it's all off.'

'Oh! I gathered in August that you had come to an understanding. But you've been so secretive about the whole affair, from the very beginning. I don't want to seem unsympathetic, but it's very difficult for me when I am kept so very much in the dark.'

'I'm sorry. There isn't really much to say. We thought things were going to be all right in August. But we decided not to make anything public until we were more sure. And now Stella has decided that she—that she——' John could not go on.

'I shouldn't have called telling your own father making things public. Still, you're your own master now. Of course, to be frank, the whole affair is

quite incomprehensible to me. Stella should be old enough now to know her own mind. I must confess I think she has behaved very badly to you.'

'No! No! No!' John broke out with agonized vehemence. Then, restraining himself, in a scarcely audible, monotonous voice, he began to talk about Stella and himself, painfully and carefully picking his way from word to word as though they were stepping-stones over a quicksand. When he had come to the end, there was an intense silence. The after-tones of all he had been saying hummed and quivered on the air, a last appeal for understanding, for rescue, for strength above all to follow out his unaccompanied love wherever it might lead.

Then his father said: 'It certainly seems to have been a very unfortunate business for you. Still, you are young; we've all gone through stages like this: when you're as old as I am, you will see it in better proportion. Perhaps if you had come to me for advice before this it would not be so hard on you now: after all, I'm an older man than you, and I *have* had some experience. It has not been easy for me to keep in the background, knowing you wanted help and wanting to help you. If you had only asked me, I should have said—and I say it now—I don't think Stella is the right girl for you. What has happened proves it. I'm very proud of you, though I don't talk about it much, and frankly I've never thought she was good enough for you. I've watched you very carefully the last year or two, and I cannot feel she has been an influence for good. You have changed. You are different from your old self. I'm certain it will be all for

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the best. So cheer up; there are plenty of other nice girls – you'll find one that will make you much happier than Stella could have . . . '

So that is that, reflected John, and I have been married to Stella for twenty years, and now my father is dying in the next room. Yes, the triptych is complete, and below is written, 'Ere the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.' For they had been denials, all three, childish and trivial in remembrance, yet once how deep and subtle in act. Not, like Peter's, the ignominious denials of fear; but crude, terrifying, half divine – the majestic betrayal of Lucifer, the passionate betrayal of Judas – love's betrayals. For love is not to be had for the asking nor the giving. Like the wind, it bloweth where it listeth. A visitation of angels, or a possession by

devils Irresistible and impersonal as lightning – when it strikes in full force, who may control it? His father had not been able to control it. That was all. Love had been too much for him. There was nothing to forgive. As well you might forgive the moon for raising her destructive tides or the wind for beating down an orchard's blossom. It was not 'forgive and forget'; but 'remember, and be whole.' Like chains rusty and rankling, long covered by the bark, those three disasters had strangled the natural growth of love. Now they were brought to light, and he knew himself free to love again. Happy as the scent of gorse on headlands, the old love was released to him out of the past. When the door opened and he was called in, he went willingly, the ban lifted, knowing he would not fail his father now.

# A Boy's World

## by Herbert Palmer

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MY early years were spent in an atmosphere which, to people born after 1900, may seem very Dickensian. I was born in 1880, and, as I have perhaps too often repeated, of nonconformist parents, my father a Wesleyan Methodist minister; and looking back upon my childhood I find myself peering over the pages of a remote picture-book. Till I reached the age of twelve the world I lived in was very close to the world of Dickens; and I don't think that there was much difference between that period of my life and the early part of Victoria's reign. I do not remember ever seeing crinolines in use, but my mother was married in a lilac silk crinoline, which my sisters dug out of a box a few years ago. When at the age of eleven we took up our quarters in the mining village of Cawden her long ringlets were still stroking her shoulders, and though my father never wore very distinctive mutton-chop side-whiskers, I know from photographs that nearly every middle-aged man wore them till I was about six. The little Grammar School I attended till the age of fourteen was very Dickensian, and got more so instead of less during my last year there; but the quality of its schooling was being questioned; and it was plain to a few intelligent spirits

that it would have to reform or disappear. The breath of Change was in the air, but it was no more than a light breath, only perceptible to a tiny minority.

I remember that about a year after we came to Cawden the playground bully arrived at school on what he called a 'safety bike,' that is a low bike of two even-sized wheels (the size and shape as to-day), though the tyres were narrow and of solid india-rubber; and about two years after that I saw for the first time (and with very shocked feelings) a woman riding a bike. I also remember my headmaster telling the school that very soon night would be turned into day, and that London and other large towns would be lit up by electricity. But I remember no electric lighting in any of the houses. There were also no motor cars of any kind, and the trams of the neighbouring towns were all horse-trams or steam-trams. The possibility of flying through the clouds in anything but balloons was discussed, but more in a mood of levity than seriousness; and the most intelligent human-being was quite ready to stake his immortal soul against such a fantastical possibility. No! – though the breath of Change was in the air, really great changes seemed impossible, and it was plain that the world would



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continue to be very much what it had been.

Religious beliefs, also, were very fixed, however much they might have been challenged by Bradlaugh and others. The vision of *Pilgrim's Progress* ruled the Methodist Churches and influenced all the other churches; and though I have no wish to challenge the main truths of that great and wonderful allegory, it is necessary to point out that its strong substratum of Calvinism and frequent assertions about an eternal hell of fire and brimstone were very upsetting to highly strung people. Too many believed that they were not among the Elect, assenting to Calvinism with their hearts while they denied it with their lips. Moreover, there was a good deal of worry about the meaning of the Unpardonable Sin; and every lunatic asylum closed its doors upon religious maniacs, many of whom believed that they had committed it. I myself wondered for a short time if I had committed it, and was desperately unhappy. What was it? I strove to understand, and I asked questions; but nobody could satisfactorily explain that mysterious transgression. I thought perhaps it had something to do with cursing God; with the result, of course, that my unwilling mind slammed sudden maledictions in front of the name of the deity (whom my mother and aunts, strange sticklers for reverence, called 'Gawd'). I remember that this curious ailment started while I was in the middle of reading Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, produced in some inexplicable way by the drab melancholy of the novel. I certainly did not so curse aloud, but whispered

horrid maledictions with my brain. But I realized that this was so much against my actual will that I was more or less freed from responsibility. I suffered very much from nightmares and aggressive phenomena relative to nightmares, and began to wonder if one of those wretched imps that sometimes spat at me when I was lying in bed (generally in broad daylight) was mainly responsible. I was somewhat comforted when I read that John Bunyan had been similarly beset; but the information could not rid me of the pest.

I may be told that I was living in a very wicked and foolish world. Only too likely; but it had this advantage over the present world: it was wicked and foolish rather than anæmic, red and white rather than pale pink, black and white rather than grey. It was truthful and dishonest rather than prevaricating, courageous and cowardly rather than evasive. The worst you can say about it is that it was hot and cold rather than lukewarm, sweet and bitter rather than buttery. It had a soul to be saved as well as damned, and a good round fleshy bottom that you could see to kick, - which was infinitely more stimulating to the moral foot than to-day's bony butt end of an awful shadow with a grinning death's head at the top. You could look at the Victorian world, seize on it, smite it, wrestle with it. Your own individuality had a chance of survival; you were a human being, a definite conscious entity, and not part of a whirling, rushing machine. To-day you find yourself blessing you don't quite know what, and cursing your own shadow. And all because the main prop of

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human life has become physical pleasure and convenience. All because too much stress has been laid on the ministrations of Mammon and the advantages of variety and sudden change. All because of something good that has been allowed to run too freely, something that might be sanctified and shackled if only man could be brought to realize that he has an eternal soul instead of a mere intelligent body to generate children and feed worms.

We have got rid of so much that was too bitter or too pungent, and merely put the insipid or sickly in its place. The world is dying of jaundice and pale face, and rubbing on the paint and powder an inch thick won't hide the fact that a puppet is a thing of straw and sawdust. Even the stern Sabbatical Sunday was more of a Sunday than the moon-stricken half-holiday that has got tipped into its place. At any rate, people were definite, they knew what they wanted or what they thought they ought to want, and so everybody got a day of quiet, doing rather much as he liked so long as he didn't make a noise in the street or play games in the public places. A lot of people went to church or chapel, perhaps half the adult population of places like Cawden did so, and 90 per cent. were attendant during some part of the year; and to tell the truth they followed the instincts of enjoyment as much as of duty or habit. They liked the emotional part of the service, especially the singing; and at the church and chapel doors they picked up one another for walks, while young men discovered sober wives there, with prospects of stability even in the loins of frivolous women,

especially if they were sufficiently convinced of original sin as to contemplate the possibility of repenting in eternal Hell for playing the slattern. The preaching was certainly very much to the point, but seemed to do everybody some good, save a few hypersensitive people like my sister Ethel and me. During my three years at Cawden I went to chapel nearly twice every Sunday, and sometimes even stayed to the evening prayer-meeting, not, indeed, because I wanted to, but because I was expected to do so. I think I shall never forget the awful wailing hymn-tune about the end of everything and the Judgment Day, as terrifyingly popular as it was depressing. When it was sung at the end of the service just before the commencement of the prayer meeting it paralysed people into sitting still, or sent them bolting out of church as if the Devil were after them.

Then O my Lord prepare  
My soul for that Great Day,  
O wash me in Thy precious blood  
And take my sins away.

Minister and local preacher testified to the final Day of Judgment and the Last Day of Earth; and though they hardly expected such an event to happen inside a thousand years, they let people know that there was a strong possibility of their being burnt alive in their beds and waking up among the lost goats. Nowadays when the present trend points to the End of Everything before the conclusion of the century they don't bother to be so vehement, though whether it is going to be brought about by Hitler's Storm-troopers, or some super-efficient science fool loosing the Atom, or the Angel Gabriel review-

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ing Modernist poetry, or the Holy of Holies catching sight of some of Wyndham Lewis's yadahoo Art, only the pilgrims who have escaped Vanity Fair have a right to proffer opinion. So I'll have to keep my mouth still about that, and merely be content with describing Sunday as it was in those days. There were no Sunday newspapers, and there was no Sunday tennis. Neither was there any movement through the countryside of tram, train, or wagonette, worth speaking of. But there was a Sunday post in the morning, and after that there was wonderful silence. A few of the Cawden pit boys went rabbiting or got together in corners and played pitch and toss, or marbles; or in some wide untrodden place behind the pit bank the game of tip-cat. But nearly the whole world, unless it was singing or praising God or hearing sermons, was listening to Silence, such heavenly Silence as is not known to-day, and will probably never be known again. If only the present-day preacher would tell his congregations that whoever turns on his sermon in the back-garden to torment the unwilling ears of law-abiding atheists is in closer danger of Hell fire than the atheists he might not only please God, but possibly find himself on the way to filling his church with eager listeners instead of emptying it of nave gapers.

But I didn't like Sunday very much, chiefly because I was expected to attend chapel twice, and wasn't allowed to read quite what I chose. The occasional prayer-meetings which I attended repelled me, though every now and again I heard some very fluent and inspired language. At one

of these prayer-meetings my sister Ethel (who died during the War) walked timidly to the communion rail and got 'converted,' a thing that didn't impress me very much as there was really nothing bad enough to convert. I remember that I shortly afterwards joined the ranks of the persecutors and sneered at her a little – chiefly because she wasn't quite as jolly as she had been. Some of my Sunday readings had included stories of boys persecuted for righteousness' sake, but as the persecuted boys were often intolerable little prigs I suppose I felt some of my sympathies lean towards the persecutors. Still I wasn't habitually like that. I still read the Bible to myself occasionally (though not as often as formerly), and I think that some passages moved me more than they had done. Perhaps it was about this time that I was so moved and impressed by the story of Esther and the story of Ishmael and Hagar, and by the New Testament text, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' though not until recent years did I begin to really understand the symbolism of 'the blood' or 'the Lamb'.

Sometimes the Methodist church reared rainbows. There were concerts and entertainments and lectures. Excellent nigger minstrels, real 'converted' niggers from the American States came to us and sang riotous religious melodies, some of them, I think, by the lilt of the tunes, the forerunners of modern jazz. Then there were visits from external preachers and lecturers like Peter Mackenzie, who created pleasant diversions and brought fireworks out

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of Heaven. Peter Mackenzie, a converted miner, and a great hulk of a man, was the genius of the Methodist church. He was gifted with a nimble and rather coarse wit and was always praising God. He couldn't even fasten up his bootlaces without praising God for the tags. He jested all the time he prayed and all the time he preached, though I can remember none of his pungent witticisms and have to fall back on one told by Viscount Snowden: Reproved one day for the capering nudity of his language, he roared out, 'Praise the Lord! the words rush out of my mouth before I have time to put their shirts on.' I think he was a sort of mix-up of Dan Leno and Rabelais in a Puritan collar. The sweat poured from him when he preached, and he all the time mopped his forehead with a great silk handkerchief, elocuting and acting, and playing the mountebank. But his natural fire and inspired abandon didn't always atone for his crudity and illiteracy. 'Confound the man!' cried my father after one of his visits. 'He's running dry. He never reads anything.' But, I think, he knew the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* off by heart.

Soon after we came to Cawden my brother Edgar passed for the ministry and went to one of the Methodist theological colleges. He came back quite reformed and jolly, and with his head full of indoor table games and new enthusiasms for football and cricket. This last we played in a field at the back of the garden, till the farmer turned us off, after which we returned to the side cinder entry. But my chief playmate out of school-hours was Ethel. Of my youngest

sister Elsie at this time I can remember little, so our relationship must have been rather more amicable than they had been. At any rate I was now too much of a schoolboy to demean myself with quarrelling with little girls; and though I dare say she kicked my shins from time to time, I took little notice of it. When my governess left us her education along with Ethel's was taken over by my eldest sister, Eva, who was developing in knowledge and importance. She took the governess's place at the meal-table, and Ethel and I were banished more or less to the kitchen with the servant—a pitman's pretty daughter. Though I liked the servant well enough I got rather too much of her, and tried to cultivate sarcasm and irony to defeat her coal-dust attacks and defences. Sometimes I used my fists, but had to be careful, for she was a great hefty young woman; and, moreover, she might inform against me. My very high but somewhat battered spirits were a little mortified by the quality of the meal-time conversation. Before we came to Cawden I had sat down to table rather more frequently with the family, where I had listened to newspaper conversations and had learned something about current events of the day—especially the latest murders. I think that murders were not half so frequent in Victorian days as they are now, and were looked upon almost as political events. I had been reproved by a Puritan aunt for pretending to be Jack the Ripper, and I know that I was rather too interested in Mrs. Maybrick and the destructive possibilities of fly-papers; but as my

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father interestingly discussed everything over the plates it was not likely that I should keep my brain shut. I remember that my mother one day despairingly cried out, 'I think the world is growing more and more wicked every day,' and that my father, quick at repartee, and never a respecter of persons, veered round on her with 'Not it, you silly woman. It's you that's beginning to learn more about it.' He was no respecter of persons, though I can vouch for it that his replies to my mother were generally more affectionate and guarded than that.

Now at Cawden there was to be rarely such meal-time fun, though I learnt all about the housemaid's love affairs, and sometimes used to plague her about them. She answered me after her kind, sometimes I thought very indiscreetly. One day, joking with her rather than quarrelling, I pulled a most frightful face, crying out, 'That's what I'll look like when I'm dead.' Her reply was characteristic, 'Well, then, we'll all know what place you've gone to.'

I felt convinced that these kitchen banishments were the fault of my sister Eva, that I was the victim of a deep plot, and that it was chiefly her fault that I was deprived of my newspaper knowledge; but I probably judged her wrongly, for owing to the buffetings and deprivations at Cawden Grammar School I was growing very uncouth. During one eventful midday meal I hit my father and then fled to the pantry with the carving knife. I locked myself in till the storm had subsided; and though I had no actual intention of making use of the carving

knife, I was prepared, if needs be, to stay there till next day and put the whole house to an inconvenience. If they had only known the half of what I was suffering at school I'd have been taken away, and such horrid incidents would have been rendered psychologically impossible. But I was accepting the school barbarisms and frustrations as normalisms and not making half enough of a song about them. I was as quixotic as I was blunt and puerile, and was continually retiring to the back garden to eat worms.

That, however, is figurative language, for it is necessary to say that we had a rather nice back garden, which my father took a good deal of pride in, though he did little of the necessary work in it himself. Nor were Ethel and I as industrious in it as we ought to have been, though we earned an occasional sixpence for weeding it, and ate most of the currants (there were not many of them) before they got to the dish. We were allowed a tiny patch of ground to ourselves, and got very interested in the results of flower seeds; candytuft, I remember, one of the chief of them. Here I killed scores of wasps with my popgun; but discovered one day that most of the wasps were domestic bees belonging to a hive a few doors away. Hugging another wound to my conscience I desisted at once, for I liked bees, and did not want to deplete anyone's hive.

I still played with toys and joined my sisters in many of their house games. The table battles with lead soldiers continued as in earlier days, and the games with dolls' houses as in earlier days.

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I also went to see local football and cricket matches, played by adults; and felt that I'd be proud to belong to some of the boys' clubs, especially those which were daubed with such exciting definitions as 'The snotty-nosed eleven,' and 'The tiger stripes.'

Across the back yard I sometimes stretched a clothes-line, trying to walk on it as I had seen acrobats walk on tight-ropes; but the line sagged and I always fell off before I had gone three paces. How light I was in weight at the age of twelve and thirteen can be judged from the fact that there seemed little likelihood of my breaking the clothes-line.

A new game that I sometimes played, a great game among the pit boys and pit men, was Tip Cat. You laid a little dumpy pointed peg on the ground (sometimes, I think, with its nose up, in a tiny indenture of the ground), struck at it with a thick stick so that it rose sharply into the air and then smote it into the distance. Your opponent measured out the distance with running strides (trying by the length of stride to make the number as few as possible), and the number of strides recorded your hit. . . . But there was no good place for playing it near the house, and I too often struck the peg into the cabbages.

My mother continually sought to invent a new game, the most prominent of which was a sort of bagatelle game. She hoped to earn some money by patenting it, and frequently sent it away by parcel post. She was always hoping, poor devoted and deluded woman, but never succeeded. A new game for the frivolous British people might bring in some extra pin-money,

and perhaps go so far as to create a little nest-egg to draw on for the absent-minded, dreamy child that ought to have been born with a sack of gold in its thin arms and a silver spoon in its voluble mouth. The Victorians were crazy on house games. They doped themselves with them, and were continually bringing out new ones, some of them financially very successful. My mother worried us a little with her fancy games, particularly me, for, though I was continually inventing games, or getting ideas for them, out of the *Boys' Own Paper*, particularly football and cricket gambling games played with numbered pieces of paper, I did not like playing an untried one that I had not worked out myself.

A good deal of my creative faculty went into these games. I wrote less verse than in governess years, though I think I did perpetrate one rather good poem for a boy of thirteen. It began with

I watched the wheels of the daylight  
Sink into the rosy West

But though I kept the poem till I was twenty, it was finally destroyed.

Some rough stanzas that I have discovered written on the back of a school bill dated by my mother June 28th, 1893, though they seem to point to deterioration in handwriting and punctuation, prove that I was trying hard to think. My lyrical effort is called 'Sorrow,' and begins

Down in the depths of deep despair  
Of unutterable woe  
Where sorrow often vanquish's pain.

As the poem progresses it gets more

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gloomy and awful, and expresses the thought that man's life is ruled by sorrow, that mental pain is harder to endure than physical pain, and that the results of every evil thought and action are hoarded in the heart for ever along with the good. It is evident that I had been counting syllables instead of stresses, and also was not quite clear in mind as to what constituted a syllable. I was conscious that 'vanquishes' created too long and dragging a line, for I had made an attempt by the insertion of an apostrophe to pronounce it as one syllable, though I can't imagine why I didn't substitute the verb 'conquers'; but probably I thought it too concrete or too commonplace. I was also very worried by the participle 'hoarded' which would not rhyme with 'chord,' so I first wrote it as 'hored' and then crossed it out and altered it into 'hoard.' I was manifestly nearly as much worried by the principles of Art as by the 'shudders' of my emotions, and possibly the intense gloom of the termination is as much due to frustrated articulation as to frustrated happiness. Manifest also from these rough, though almost metrically correct lines, is my paucity of literary background. I certainly was not reading enough verse, and the atmosphere of the Grammar School had defeated me.

But though during my three years' stay at Cawden I read and learnt by heart very little verse, not a quarter as much as in earlier years, I sometimes got very busy with other kinds of literature.

A haystack of remembered and half-remembered literature yields Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, Scott's *Talisman*

and *Ivanhoe*, Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and *Bottle Imp*, Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* and *Oliver Twist*, Max Pemberton's *Iron Pirate*, Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* and part of Charles Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth*. *The Iron Pirate* came out with sensational pictures in weekly issues of *Chums*, and perhaps impressed me more than it should have done. But I think the book of books was Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*, which I thought then, and thought for a long time to be, the pinnacle of all Red Indian stories. But recently I have read David Garnett's remarkable *Pocahontas*, and now know that Fenimore Cooper had not reached the pinnacle. David Garnett with his combined realism, poetry, and historical accuracy has written a book at whose beacon all future writers of Indian and Settler life will probably light their torches, a novel of the texture of Charles Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth* and George Moore's *Héloïse and Abélard*. . . . My praise may sound too intense, but I believe that I am right, and, at any rate, since the child is father of the man, my enthusiasm does express how good Indian and Backwoodsmen tales affected me in those days, though very rarely could I get hold of a good one.

In regard to *The Cloister and the Hearth* I was somewhat puzzled. I found it lying about in my father's study, and was attracted by the sensational yellow cardboard cover. But I was even more shocked than attracted, and decided as I excitedly read on that I had got hold of a most amazing shilling shocker. The book was wonderful, lovely, most exciting – but that surely was partly due to my depraved

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taste. Surely the laws of God did not allow a really good book to be bound in such florid cardboard. I did not finish it; I felt that I ought not to continue, but my burning curiosity led me as far as Gerard's final escape from the burgomeister. Stevenson's *Bottle Imp* also shocked me a little – I can't to-day even imagine why, unless it was that there was too much Devil in it, the horrid thing that I was always trying to flee from.

Intermingled with the great standard works of English fiction I read the usual schoolboy stories by Gordon Stables, Manville Fenn and others. I also tried Henty, the most popular of all schoolboy writers. But I did not like Henty, and did not go far with him. I thought his books dull and woodenly written, crowded with mere incident, and lacking in emotion and colour. Moreover, I could not visualize his characters, they seemed to be mere puppets. The barrier between me and other boys was just that – Henty! I have expressed to-day what I distinctly felt about Henty, though I was quite inarticulate about him at the time.

\* \* \*

Several pronounced incidents stand out of the mining horizon, one of them an election incident which got my father into slight difficulties. . . . On polling day I splashed the family

Tory colours all over the back garden, fixing red flannel flags and streamers to the bushes and clothes props. The colour red, the colour of the soldiers' coats, was in those days a frequent Tory colour; but it was like a red rag to a bull against people with strong socialist leanings. And so it proved at Cawden. I heard that several members of my father's congregation said they wouldn't attend chapel any more; they said they had never before heard of a Tory Wesleyan minister, and that no good Christian could possibly be an opponent of Gladstone, 'the grand old man.' The real chapel colour was Liberal, a confiding blue, not the horrible crimson hue of Popery, 'the Scarlet Woman.' My father shrugged his shoulders and told them he had had no wish to advertise his colours so violently, and that the trouble was due to that 'dreadful lad' of his. But I think he was more amused than angry; and he did not reprove me.

During these three years at Cawden so much seemed to happen, and yet, as far as I was concerned, so little of developing importance. I believe that they were the most unhappy years of my life; and when, at the age of fourteen and a half, they came to an end and my parents went to live in a beautiful country village among the Pennine mountains, I was nearly beside myself with ecstasy.



# The Picture Show

by Eiluned Lewis

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MRS. MEACHAM smoothed the fingers of her white kid gloves, drew out her handkerchief, faintly scented with lavender-water, held it a moment to her nostrils and looked anxiously towards the door. She thought she heard someone coming upstairs, but no one came, and for the ninth time that morning she experienced a feeling of relief mixed with disappointment, while her hopes, which had been so high, slipped yet a little lower. Perhaps, after all, Victor had been right. 'A very foolish scheme,' he had said. 'You will do nothing but lose money.'

It had all been her own idea – the fulfilment of years of working and dreaming, until what had seemed impossible was accomplished, and here she was, in a small upstairs room in Bond Street entirely hung with her own pictures. Above the outer door an orange banner announced an Exhibition of Modern Painting, and these modern painters, among whom Mrs. Meacham so surprisingly found herself, had been supervising the hanging of their pictures in the adjoining rooms – strange men in wide hats and coloured shirts, who invited each other out to drinks and stared rather blankly at Mrs. Meacham whenever they met on the stairs.

Of course, it had all been very

expensive, the framing of the pictures had alone cost £40, and then there was the business of bringing them up from Herefordshire, while the exorbitant commission demanded by the agent on the price of each one might have filled a bolder spirit than Mrs. Meacham's with some misgivings. Finally there were her hotel bill and the cost of a new frock, which last item had not been excessive; a little contriving on the part of Miss Pumphrey, the village dressmaker, with an old evening dress and some lace that once belonged to Mrs. Meacham's mother had done wonders. There was also a new hat, bought in Regent Street, her first day in town. Catching sight of herself, reflected in the glass of one of her own pictures, Mrs. Meacham saw that the shape was becoming to the delicate oval of her face.

A large number of the pictures were still-life. They were, Mrs. Meacham considered, her best work, and she had been told that they were now the fashion. So she had painted primulas in a red flower-pot, zinnias in a grey ginger-jar, a spray of flowering currant in a pewter vase, St. Brigid anemones in the same pewter vase, perched on three leather-bound books. They were, Mrs. Meacham remembered, three volumes of Macaulay's

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history, and Victor had been vexed when she had spilt water on their backs. Still-life pictures were not, after all, as placid as they appeared: they were all part of the difficult little home which she had never succeeded in running well. Sunlight that fell through tall windows on to rich curtains and warm mahogany (as it had fallen through the windows of her childhood's home) was so much easier to paint than all the makeshifts of a little studio that had once been a potting-shed, and there were times when she wearied of the pewter vase and the ginger-jar.

The landscapes, some few in oils, more in water-colours, were hung less favourably, since their chances of selling were not thought good. But to the artist who had painted them they meant so many days of escape. In one she had tried to catch the burnished glow of gorse on the hillside; another had been done on an evening in February with a green sky and patches of snow under the hedges. Here was the cool heart of a wood, tempered sunlight and blue shadows on the bracken; and here a stone bridge and a patch of bog cotton blown in the wind like a troop of white-haired elves. She had re-discovered the place on the hills one summer, and sat down to sketch it with mixed feelings, because it was there, twenty years before, that she had refused to marry Edward Rivers. Even at this distance of time she could remember that winter's walk over the frozen bogs, the clear amber of the sunlight and the snow on the distant hills which had turned the streams to sullen green. They had walked all morning, carrying their lunch in their pockets, and on the way home Edward

had asked her to be his wife and she had refused, saying that she wanted to live in Italy and paint pictures. Yet in the end it was he who went abroad, while she returned hastily from Florence to nurse a dying father, take part in the selling-up of her home, and finally to marry Victor. Poor Victor! She wondered how he was getting on without her and whether his hay-fever was being troublesome.

. . . Someone was coming upstairs! The curtain across the doorway was pulled back and two men stepped into the room—a stout, middle-aged man followed by a young one with foxy side-whiskers and a dead-white face. It was this man who was speaking as they entered:

'All tripe, my dear fellow. I told Dick Schutz so last night. By the way, have you seen Henry's stuff at the Lichfield? Perfectly putrid; but of course Mannering's giving him a good puff!'

Mrs. Meacham had withdrawn into a corner. She would like to have offered them each a catalogue (there was a neat pile of them untouched on a table near the door: 'Still Life and Landscapes, by Clare Meacham,' very nicely printed), but the younger man looked so savage that she hesitated. Suddenly he poked his face into her largest picture — (No. 12: Flowering Currant).

'Good God, Travers!' he exclaimed, 'I thought you told me this was Engelberg's show? This is simply funny!'

'Must be the wrong room,' grunted the other. 'But there's another fellow here, one of Paul Miller's crowd. I promised Paul I'd give him a notice.'

'Well, we seem to have struck a

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seedsman's catalogue by mistake,' said the young man. 'It's queer how these women have no idea of form – nor how to put on their colour either. By the way, did you read Dodd's remarks in the *Phoenix*? He simply excelled himself . . .'

They went out, leaving Mrs. Meacham in her corner. Her first feeling was that someone had struck her in the face; but her distress and embarrassment were for the one who had dealt the blow.

'How dreadful for him if he were to find out who I am,' she said to herself, and then suddenly discovered that she felt a little faint. There was one chair in the room and she sat down on it, leaning her head on her hand. The roar of the traffic in Bond Street sounded distantly in her ears like some unfriendly sea. She remembered her high hopes and knew suddenly that she had been a fool.

'Not much of a crowd yet, I fear,' said a cheerful voice.

She looked up quickly and found the agent's secretary standing in the doorway. At first Mrs. Meacham had been abashed by this gentleman's presence. He sat all day at a desk in the downstairs room, writing busily, and was, it appeared from his remarks, on intimate terms with so many eminent artists. Later she discovered that his name was Wiggs, that he lived in Ealing and had a consumptive daughter, whereupon she became sorry for him and was no longer nervous in his company.

Mr. Wiggs now approached her. 'Murdstone of the *Leader* and the *Weekly Post* man have just looked in,' he said. 'They'll be coming in here

directly, I've no doubt. Very useful men indeed. Are you sure you like to wait?' he added. 'It seems rather oppressive here to-day. You're not feeling the heat, are you?'

'I think perhaps I am,' murmured Mrs. Meacham. 'I'll go out for a little – not long.'

'That's right,' Mr. Wiggs rejoined heartily. 'The public is often a bit sticky on the first day, but those Fleet Street gentlemen will be here in a minute. One can't have too many Press notices.'

Mrs. Meacham went down the carpeted stairs and out into the strong sunlight of the streets. The air refreshed her at once as she walked slowly towards Piccadilly. It was a lovely day in June – the season and the time of year both in full flower. Bond Street was full of fluttering light and colour; white clouds sailed overhead through the summer sky, the houses seemed to be hung with flags and the florists' shops had burst into a thousand blossoms; the windows were full of jade and ivory, exquisite clothes and scents. 'London in June,' thought Mrs. Meacham, and her heart began to sing softly to itself. How ridiculous, she thought, to have minded anything that rude newspaper man had said. She had painted her pictures; they were the truth, as far as she saw it. And now she was in London, it was June and the sun was shining. The smell that rose to her nostrils – a mixture of hot tar and roasting coffee, exciting and delicious – was exactly the same smell that she remembered from June days long ago.

Roasting coffee reminded her that she had breakfasted early that morning,

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so as to be in good time for the opening of her picture show. She thought: 'I'll have a cup of coffee in one of these shops. It's sure to be absurdly expensive, but I don't mind a bit.'

The shop that she entered was cool and dim, with cushioned seats along the wall behind the small tables. A waiter brought her a cup of coffee, with cream floating on the top, and a dish of sweet biscuits. At the next table were two girls, sipping iced drinks through straws. They were young and charming, and their clothes seemed not so much to be garments, bought in a shop or made laboriously by a dressmaker, as the natural expression of a pretty thought. Mrs. Meacham, who was quite absurdly sensitive to anything beautiful, took the greatest pleasure in their appearance.

'I should like to paint the fair one,' she thought, 'all in amber to match her yellow hair. She should stand by a window under a shaft of light, like a lady in a Vermeer picture, with a round mirror behind to reflect all the little people in the room.' And suddenly she saw her own life like that, as though she were outside, looking into a convex mirror where all the people and their queer antics were reflected, and understood for the first time: poor Victor, with his difficult temper; herself for ever painting the pewter vase and the ginger-jar; Mr. Wiggs with his consumptive daughter, and the two art critics, the one stout and disillusioned, and the young one with his dead-white, unhappy face – and a great pity welled up within her.

'Nothing matters much, after all,' she thought, 'if only you don't shut out the light.' Then she paid her bill and went out into the sunny street.

When she got back to her pictures there was an old lady in a beaded bonnet examining the flowering currant through her lorgnette. Mr. Wiggs was writing in the corner of the room, but on seeing Mrs. Meacham he jumped up and drew her aside with an air of suppressed excitement.

'Mrs. Meacham, I congratulate you,' he began. 'Half your pictures are sold already.'

'Sold!' she echoed blankly and looked in wonder at the old lady; but Mr. Wiggs shook his head and whispered in hollow tones:

'No sooner had you gone than a gentleman came in, asked which were your pictures, and walked straight upstairs. He went round the room quickly and said he'd like to buy all the landscapes – every one. He was quite decided in his choice; oh, yes, *quite* decided.'

'But I don't understand,' said Mrs. Meacham. 'Who do you say he is?'

Mr. Wiggs coughed discreetly. 'I fear we never disclose the name of our customers. But no doubt you will soon hear from the gentleman himself. A very gratifying beginning to an exhibition, I must say.'

Mrs. Meacham was bewildered. If this were really true, her expenses were already paid. Two of the large pictures had sold at £25 each, and several small ones had gone at £5, £10 and £15.

'In all my experience,' said Mr. Wiggs, busy fixing red patches on the

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left-hand corners of the 'sold' pictures, 'I've never known anything quite so rapid. And they look very well, if I may say so, very well indeed.'

But the days that followed brought no solution of the mystery. Only Mr. Wiggs's cheerful prognostications proved right: from then on the little exhibition flourished. Perhaps the imposing number of red patches encouraged other buyers who liked to think they were not missing a good thing. By the end of the month most of the still-life were sold and there had been two or three encouraging notices in the papers, which spoke of 'Mrs. Clare Meacham's admirable sense of values and charmingly naturalistic treatment.'

\* \* \*

In the first week of July Mrs. Meacham returned to Herefordshire with her bills all paid and a comfortable little sum in the bank. Victor was still suffering from hay-fever, which increased his natural irritability; the cook had given notice and the vicar called the evening of her return to ask her to take charge of a stall at the bazaar in aid of the church roof. After all, the picture show was of little interest to anyone except Mrs. Meacham. Victor told her that she was very fortunate not to have dropped money over the whole venture; he regarded the unknown buyer of the pictures as an eccentric fellow with a bee in his bonnet. But Mrs. Meacham was able to choose new chintzes for the drawing-room as well as an arm-chair for Victor's study; and she decided to 'let herself go' over the ordering of bulbs that autumn.

One day, towards the end of the

summer, when the garden was full of Michaelmas daisies and late roses, Victor remarked from behind the spread pages of *The Times*: 'I see Edward Rivers has died at that place in Wiltshire his uncle left him. He must have been very comfortably off. You knew him, didn't you?'

'Yes, I knew him,' said Mrs. Meacham. She was sitting at the table, stripping lavender into a china bowl, and for a time she went on plucking at the stalks with fingers that were a little stained from the juice. Some of the lavender had not been picked early enough and had already flowered; some was still so tightly in bud that it was difficult to strip; the lavender that was in the bowl was cool and damp to the touch. Mrs. Meacham went on pulling at the stalks, saying to herself over and over again, 'Edward Rivers is dead!', till suddenly it seemed to her that the room was dark and suffocating.

'If Victor talks about him, I don't think I shall be able to bear it,' she thought, and getting up hurriedly, she went out into the garden. She left the lavender on the table, and the little maid cleared it away when she came to lay the cloth for lunch. There was no more lavender stripped that summer.

Yet a week later Edward Rivers was again the subject of conversation, for a letter from Messrs. Crutchley, Blogram & Crutchley, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, informed Mrs. Meacham that, under the will of their late client, Mr. Edward Rivers, of Gatley Grange, Wiltshire, she received £1,000 and the sole possession of his pictures, to dispose of in any way she thought fit.

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Even Victor was excited by this.

'A most extraordinary thing!' he remarked. 'I must say the poor man died at a very opportune moment, as far as we are concerned, though one should hardly, perhaps, look on it in that light. Still, £1,000, even with the deduction of death duty, will not come amiss.' He added: 'You never told me you were such friends.'

'He once asked me to marry him,' said Clare simply. 'But I have never seen him since.'

'Do you know anything about his pictures?' Victor asked. 'You'll sell them, of course? There's no room for them here, with all your things about. But it's a bad time for selling, I'm afraid.'

'I don't think I shall sell *one* of them,' his wife answered.

Victor merely shrugged at this; of late, particularly since that business of the picture-show, he had come to have more respect for her judgment.

Messrs. Crutchley, Blogram & Crutchley wrote that they would be glad to hear Mrs. Meacham's wishes on the disposal of the pictures; so on a wet October day she and Victor set out for Wiltshire by a slow cross-country train. A south-westerly gale rattled on the windows of the carriage, and Clare sat cold and wretched in her corner seat, thinking how strange a turn of Fate was bringing her to the house where she might have gone as a bride. It was ridiculous, she told herself, to remember such things when Victor was sitting there opposite her.

They drove up from Gatley station in a decrepit fly. The hedges on either side of the road smouldered with the spent fires of autumn and

hung heavy with moisture; Victor complained that the cushions of the fly were damp. There were imposing iron gates and a lodge at the entrance to the Grange, but the drive was stony and rutted, and Victor, peering out of the windows, gave it as his opinion that Edward Rivers had 'let the place down badly.' The house, when it came into view round the next bend, was a grey Georgian building, with tall windows. The fly crunched over the gravel and jerked to a stop opposite the pillared portico. While Victor, his coat-collar turned up in an attempt to keep out the rain, was paying the driver and telling him that his upholstery needed airing, Mrs. Meacham climbed the steps and pulled timidly at the iron handle of the doorbell. Far away she heard its jangle and echo, and she thought: 'I do wish Edward were here to welcome me!'

The door was opened by a thin-faced woman in black. She eyed Mrs. Meacham with scant favour and called out to Victor:

'If you want to get back to the Red Lion, or anywhere else this evening, you'd better order that fly to come for you. The men have all gone and there isn't so much as a mouse in the stables.'

'Of course, of course,' said Victor. 'I was about to ask you . . . Clare, how long do you suppose we shall be?'

Clare heard the question, but she did not stop to answer, for suddenly she knew that Edward Rivers was waiting for her. 'I have waited so many years,' she heard him say. 'Why have you been so slow in coming?'

The sound of Victor, the house-

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keeper and the driver arguing together faded in her ears, and Edward's voice led her on, drawing her from the hall, with its polished floor and shallow staircase, to the drawing-room, where, in dim mirrors, she saw herself approach and held out welcoming hands. Everywhere there were pictures – portraits of past Rivers with pointed chins and brooding eyes – and all these pictures were hers. Beyond the drawing-room came the library. Between the tall bookshelves she stood at the window and looked out on the lawn. In the fading light of the afternoon the drenched grass glowed with an unearthly intensity of green. Clare softly stroked the heavy brocade of the curtains with her fingers; in her mind's eye she saw them drawn at the approach of evening, shutting out the confusion of the day, making a safe encirclement of yellow lamplight and the scent of wood smoke, and a strange contentment filled her. Yet still she had not found what she sought, nor did she need to ask the way. Crossing the library, she opened another door, and knew that her

journey was ended. It was a small room, panelled in white wood. Over a Sheraton desk near the window was a crayon drawing of herself, as a girl of seventeen, in an absurd straw hat. She had forgotten its existence, but remembered it now, and the artist, a young Frenchman, a friend of Edward's, who had drawn it in a single morning. Under the picture hung another one – her own water-colour of the stone bridge and the bog cotton, and all round the room, hanging from the low picture-rail, were her landscapes which she had last seen in Bond Street. The red patches which Mr. Wiggs had fixed so ecstatically on the day of their sale were still there.

Victor's voice broke into her dream: 'There you are, Clare! What on earth made you go rushing off like that? I've told that fellow to come back in an hour. It will soon be too dark to see anything, and we've a great many things to do. Don't forget that we've come here on business!'

# Reviews

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THE POEMS OF JOHN CLARE. Edited by  
J. W. TIBBLE. 2 Vols. Dent. 25s.

To read this book in order to review it is as if one were compelled to skim across the English woodlands in a Daimler: not quite so lamentable perhaps, for one can explore some bypaths, though hurriedly; rather is our editor our nurse who, with an eye on press-day, grips our unwilling hand and drags us on, barely aware of a pooty here or a struttle there before we are lugged past the mouldiwarps sweeping on the dotterel to poddle over the sludge in the balk with the wuff of the housedog already in our ears, though we would gladly soodle a sloomy way home with a burred moon over us and the fern-owls chittering in the pingles and the holts.

Mr. Tibble has given us 300 poems hitherto unpublished, in addition to the 560 which he has collated with the manuscripts and carefully restored in accordance with the original readings, often unwarrantably tampered with by early editors. The poems gain conspicuously by this careful restoration. Clare's first editor, Taylor, Mr. Tibble tells us, 'frequently standardized dialect forms and toned down vigorous expressions . . . Clare accepted such changes reluctantly.' No wonder. Compare 'Deep blushes came across her face' with the restored reading 'Her face burnt red as any cloak,' and 'But me she noticed with a laughing eye' with 'But o'er her shoulder left a laugh on me.' Compare, too, 'limping' with 'hirpling', 'drops which patter' with 'dropples pattering', and 'comrade' with 'matey.' In some cases Mr. Tibble has emended sheer mistakes, for instance, 'Rich healthiness

bedyes the summer grass'; obviously a better reading than the careless 'hedges' of the early edition.

Though some old favourites will be sure to catch his eye and detain him, however firm may be his intention to explore the unvisited tracks before the familiar, it is naturally with the 300 new poems that the lover of Clare will mainly concern himself on a first reading of this eagerly awaited edition. He may set out with a fear lest the poems so long unpublished might be the refuse of Clare's output and better left in the asylum where many of them were written. The thought will not survive for half an hour. The level is astonishingly high. Mr. Tibble in writing of the task of Mr. Blunden and Mr. Porter in editing the *Poems, chiefly from manuscript* in 1920, tells us that 'the editors' difficulty was not one of finding enough poems equal in quality to the best previously published but of reducing their selection to the number required at the moment.' We can well believe him; our difficulty is to understand how it was that Mr. Blunden and Mr. Porter did not induce their publisher to make the 1920 volume several times its size. To omit *The Summer Shower*, *Fairy Things*, and *Death*, to mention only three where one could easily list a hundred, must have involved a painful restraint rather culpable than commendable. However, instead of carping at the probably unavoidable omissions of Mr. Blunden – to whom every lover of Clare is deeply indebted – let us rather praise Mr. Tibble for his generosity. We are particularly grateful that he has given us Clare's satire *The Parish*: not that it is among the best or the



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most characteristic of his poems, but because it gives us Clare in a mood which but for it might have been hid from us. As Mr. Tibble says: 'The satiric mode was not natural to him, and his debt to the eighteenth century satirists was openly acknowledged; yet his adaptation of his models to fit his local and particular theme is skilful and trenchant enough.' His parson J.P. stands out clearly for us – 'a blunt, opinionated, odd, rude man' whose 'gifts at Christmas time are yearly given, No doubt as toll-fees on the road to heaven' – along with old Farmer Thrifty who 'raised the rents of all the tenants round, And then distressed them as in duty bound.' It is in *The Parish* that we see Clare in a mood of what he himself described as one of 'heavy distress' and 'embittered feelings' against the enclosure of the common land which more usually stirred him to tender or to passionate regret. Clare no less than Vaughan or Wordsworth looked back on the days of his boyhood with intense emotion, but for Clare there was a double loss. His boyhood's raptures met decay, and his boyhood's haunts were trampled to a withered weed. The theme, never long absent in the known poems, is repeated over and over again in those newly published, but though often with delicacy and loveliness never so movingly as in the familiar *Remembrances*, the poignancy of which is to a great extent dependent upon the perfect balance of rhythm with emotion. Clare seldom individualized his rhythm as in this exquisite poem; mostly he used heroic couplets, the sonnet, Spenserian stanza, rhymed quatrains, and other more or less conventionalized forms, and though he nearly always used them with sensitiveness and tact it is surprising that, possessing as he clearly did the power to mould his own forms from his own passions, he did not individualize more frequently. Sometimes he seems definitely to have chosen the wrong metre for his theme, as,

for instance, in *Crazy Nell* (a narrative poem first published in 1820), where a gruesome event is described in verses that trip along like a girl to a Maytime junketing when the fiddler is at his giddiest. In *A Summer Shower* the metre is as right as that of *Crazy Nell* is wrong. There are twenty-five stanzas, all delightful; here are four of them.

Now quickening on and on, the  
pattering wood

Receives the coming shower; birds  
trim their wings,  
And in a joyful mood

The little woodchat sings;

And blackbird, squatting in her  
mortared nest

Safe hid in ivy and the pathless wood,  
Pruneth her sooty breast

And warms her downy brood;

From dark green clumps among the  
dripping grain

The lark with sudden impulse starts  
and sings,

And mid the smoking rain

Quivers her russet wings.

The cramp'd horizon now leans on the  
ground

Quiet and cool, and labour's hard  
employ

Ceases, while all around

Falls a refreshing joy.

Not every page of these volumes is as beautiful as this, but almost every page is as readable. Clare is never obscure – though he is occasionally a little incoherent in some of the asylum poems – and he is never tedious. No one need be scared off by the dialect: the peasant words are usually so expressive that in their context their meaning is plain enough; and any which remain obscure are explained in the glossary.

Often, specially in the earlier poems, we are less aware of Clare the artist than

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of Clare the note-maker. Instead of a finished picture we have strings of phrases which arouse in us æsthetic imagery dependent to a great extent on our own experience and our own response. We give the response and give it willingly and gratefully, but we are not conscious of something creatively compelling and immense enough to outweigh all sense of what we ourselves may have to contribute. The contrast between Clare and Wordsworth in respect to the proportions here indicated is made very clear by a comparison of Clare's *Mole-catcher* with Wordsworth's *Leech-gatherer*. Clare, indeed, is never sublime with the sublimity of Wordsworth at his greatest, though he has obvious affinities with Wordsworth – as to a less degree with Burns, and, in another medium, with Morland and with Crome. Now and again in reading him we find ourselves reminded of Edward Thomas. Often, conspicuously in the lines written in a thunderstorm a few days before Clare's escape from the asylum – described with exquisite reticence and compassion in Mr. and Mrs. Tibble's *Life* – the intonation might be that of Emily Brontë at her most characteristic. And not only the intonation. Clare's philosophy, if that is the word for it, differs widely from Emily Brontë's in important respects, but there is a sense in which 'solitude and God are one' to both, and another in which each is the 'self-consumer of his woes'. At his best, as in *Remembrances*, Clare reminds us of no one. There is that completely individual mastery of rhythm that proclaims him unmistakably the born artist.

It is difficult to resist the temptation to write about Clare's poems rather than about Mr. Tibble's edition of Clare's poems. It must be added that the volumes are beautifully produced; the introduction is admirable; the glossary (by Mrs. Tibble) adequate and scholarly; the collation of texts informative and

clearly set out; and the arrangement of poems (chronological and grouped according to the place at which they were written) the best calculated to show us the development – and the maiming – of Clare's genius. The only criticism to be made is of the absence of an alphabetical index of the poems' titles. Mr. Tibble may well feel as proud of his work as we are grateful to him for it. Let us hope that his intention to have completed in this edition the work begun by Mr. Blunden and Mr. Porter will not be literally fulfilled, but that he will give us further knowledge of Clare's writings. Some of us are impatient to see for ourselves more of Clare's prose: *The Stage Coach*, *The Two Soldiers*, and, if it still exists, the drafts of Clare's novel of village life. Again, what of that facsimile of *The Midsummer Cushion*, transcribed by Clare himself in 'an expensive, finely-bound manuscript book,' that some of us are hoping for? And may there not be material for another volume of poems? Mr. Tibble has told us that the 860 poems now published are fewer than those which still exist only in manuscript. Even if most of the remnant are such that Clare himself would have discarded them had his stricken mind been equal to the task of selection, are there not fragments that we ought to have? There can be no doubt that the authors of *John Clare, a Life* (which everyone should read in conjunction with the poems) would be the ideal editors of all that remains unpublished.

EARLY VICTORIAN ENGLAND. Edited by G. M. YOUNG. 2 vols. Oxford University Press. £2 2s.<sup>1</sup>

How did they live? What did they eat? What public places were frequented, beside churches and theatres? What did they wear? And when? Had they any holidays? What were the social standards? Who vouched for whom? Did they read? What were their houses

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like? Was there a great number of servants? What were their sports and their games? What sort of hours did they keep? The great series, published by the Oxford University Press, which already includes *Shakespeare's England* and *Johnson's England*, and now these no less admirable volumes endeavour to answer questions of this kind about our ancestors' lives. One serious complaint must be made against these volumes: there is no separate chapter on the religion of the time. This is an extraordinary omission, because, except for the Reformation period, no years in our history saw the beginning of such formidable changes in religion, changes that affected so large a part of the population, changes without which the cause of English social and political changes is quite unintelligible. The Methodist movement influenced, in the main, the working and lower middle-classes, the Deistic movement and the Latitudinarian attracted but a handful of intellectuals; but the scientific rationalism, the sentimental agnosticism and the neo-Catholicism of the nineteenth century, directly or indirectly, have touched the minds of thousands in all classes. It is true that Mr. Young has some searching references to religion in his magnificent terminal essay—*Portrait of an Age*; but these brief passages are a poor index of the importance of the questions raised, echoes of which still disturb the would-be impartial modern student of society. Admirable as Mr. Young is in tone and temper he is evidently not an expert on this subject; or he would not have said that the purpose of Tract XC was 'to prove that the Articles rigidly construed were more susceptible of a Catholic than a Protestant meaning,' nor would there be so little recognition of the influence of such widely different thinkers as Whately, Maurice, Thirlwall and Mansel; nor would Mr. Young have missed the startling fact that, while *In Memoriam*

preceded the *Origin of Species*, it was itself considerably later than Newman's *Essay on Development*. In reading these volumes the main impression conveyed is of the excessive insularity of Victorian England, and its excessive departmentalism. While it was apparently easier then for a man of genius to transcend class distinctions (compare, for instance, Charles Dickens with D. H. Lawrence), the rigidity of those distinctions for most people was unbreakable. Nor did many wish to break them. George Osborne Senior despised Mayfair as wholeheartedly as Mayfair ignored him. England at this time was a country not of two nations, as Disraeli and his young friends had it, but of five or six. And what was true of social classes is true of intellectual classes. The violent arrogance of Carlyle towards Newman is typical of the pride certain men of genius took in not trying to understand their peers in other realms of thought. Of course survivals of this kind of stupidity can still be found; but could we find to-day a scientist of Darwin's eminence who had to confess that his work had made him deaf to Shakespeare? Could we find an ecclesiastic of Wilberforce's position guilty of an impertinence parallel to that bishop's ignorant, undergraduate taunt at Huxley? Men were no doubt more thorough in their own jobs than they are to-day; the dilettante kept to his dilettantism instead of exercising that pleasant power of trifling in economic, theological or scientific regions; but there was an extraordinary absence of permeation. This is seen very conspicuously, as Mr. Richardson shows in his chapter on Architecture, in such a career as John Ruskin's. Ruskin, in so far as he was read by people who did not understand him, was regarded as an entertainer, or a spectacle. As such he was admired or disliked; but it is not until this period is over that men took him seriously. There was a dreadful security about Victorian England: most men did not dream that

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life in the basements, by which their lives were made possible, would not keep to the basement. There is a parallel here between the effects of education on India and its effects on the property-less classes.

Here, in these two volumes, is an astonishingly brilliant panorama of a civilization. It is difficult to choose for especial praise where no contribution is without merit, and some are masterly both as records and analyses of the conditions under consideration. The Editor's essay, already mentioned, is the finest thing in the book; and Mr. Young gave himself the hardest task. He may perhaps exaggerate the power of Evangelicalism in its Calvinistic aspect; we have Keble's testimony that harsh discipline had not entirely conquered the Church of England, and we must not forget that there was, especially among the Unitarians and some of the Quakers, a spirit which had never acquiesced in the dogma of man's essential vileness. Still, this period is the period of the triumph of the burgesses, of the middle-class; and they almost to a man were as opposed to rationalism as to Popery. Mr. Young has succeeded in catching his age, its convictions and conventions in an essay brilliantly written and carefully supported by references. Of the other essays in the book the best are, perhaps, Mr. E. E. Kellett's *The Press*, Mrs. Peel's *Homes and Habits*, Mr. Richardson's *Architecture*, and Mr. Mottram's *Town Life and London*. One of the most disappointing articles is Mr. Allardyce Nicoll's on *The Theatre*: he confines himself almost exclusively to London, which is, in dealing with this period, an unpardonable mistake, as all who remember *John Halifax, Gentleman*, will recognise.

A word of especial commendation must be given to the hundred and thirty-seven illustrations. The only reason for illustrations in a book of this character is that they should be a genuine commentary on the text: these fulfil that condition in

a remarkable way. It would have been easy to fill the volume with portraits of famous people and drawings of celebrated places. Instead, Mr. Young has searched the newspapers, tradesmen's circulars and fashion magazines, and has provided his work with a series of pictures as delectable and as helpful as the text.

YOUNG PASQUIER. By GEORGES DUHAMEL. Translated by BEATRICE DE HOLT-THOIR. Dent. 7s. 6d.

THE ONE-EYED MOON. By MARGUERITE STEEN. Gollancz. 7s. 6d.

LUST FOR LIFE. By IRVING STONE. Lane. 8s. 6d.

WE HAVE COME TO A COUNTRY. By LETTICE COOPER. Gollancz. 7s. 6d.

ROUND TRIP. By DON TRACY. Constable. 7s. 6d.

*Young Pasquier* is quiet, alive and most delicately done. The translation is so good that one seems to be reading it in the original French, and one rests on the subtle good sense of the author with complete satisfaction. The Pasquier family live tightly packed in a tiny flat in Paris. The twelve-year-old daughter Cecile is a musical genius, and the background of their lives is the unremitting miracle of her playing. They are so poor that overdue bills and bailiffs threaten them at every moment. The mother contrives decency for them by ceaseless and devoted toil. She is drawn truly and tenderly, as indeed is each of the characters, but her figure has a mute nobility that is especially poignant. The father in middle age is studying medicine, and his family listen with awe to his sententious discourse on science and morals. He has the illusion of being still young, and there is much windy self-deception in the man. Laurent, the idealistic son of fifteen, through whose eyes the family is seen, comes to know that this inflated father has a mistress. The silent grief of his

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mother stirs him to following his father, and, waiting his moment, he forces his way into the flat of Madame Meesemacker and begs her to break off the liaison. She consents. He feels he has saved the peace of the family, but finds he has also lost his love for his father. Then his elder brother returns on leave, calls him an interfering young fool, and tells him that their father has had many mistresses in the past, and will go on having them in the future. The boy begs his mother to leave so bad a man; she is shocked by the suggestion and assures him that his father needs her care, and moreover deserves it, as he has always shown her great kindness and loves them all tenderly. His young idealism has to resolve good and evil into an acceptance of life, and he is left quivering at the blow that a knowledge of human nature entails. The book is a perfect example of the essential French quality, almost never achieved in English fiction. The essence of this quality is difficult to define. Economy of statement shapes it, but the economy of statement is based on quickness of understanding. Deep sophistication is the basis of it, money and immorality being so thoroughly comprehended that none are fooled, yet disillusionment itself makes for a solid decency and grace of behaviour. Satiety of the body casts a special Gallic glamour on things of the mind, and because the French are such complete realists they alone seem able to freely savour ideality.

Miss Marguerite Steen tells a tragic and engrossing story in her new novel, *The One-Eyed Moon*. It is a dramatic tale laid in a mountain village near Granada, and one is compelled to feel its complete authenticity. The wolfish intensity of the villagers and their searing view of life are as strangely exciting as rocks worn into wild shapes by the ravages of time and weather. It begins so well and has so moving a climax that

the reader's only unfavourable criticism is of the slight faltering in leading up to the crash of final event. The book holds within it a sensationally effective play, except that many of its greatest beauties would perhaps escape in the inevitable restrictions of the theatre. The story opens when Carmelo has given birth to a girl baby and they both seem near death. Aurelio, the husband, returns from a night in Granada with the look of one stunned by new experience, and when he is asked to name the child he says 'Maravilla'. It is a name unknown to the villagers, and is the name of an actress with whom he has spent that night. The birth of the girl, the boy who had been conceived a few hours earlier are the matter for future tragedy. We are now led back to Aurelio's youth and learn to know his quick, detached nature which found all its pleasure in observation. He studied people until he knew them, nothing escaped him, and he commanded respect by his sapient comment. With all his lively alertness to life he had the inner listening ear of one of nature's mystics. He goes as goat-herd to Granada, and meets Carmela, who is already twenty-eight. Their courtship is enchanting. Her pride, temper and vanity all fall before the poetry, intensity and wit of his wooing. She accompanies him to his mountain village, where her hard nature becomes the more embittered, and seven years pass before she bears her first and only child. Aurelio adores the little girl and has her with him during the long days on the mountains, when he sinks into communion with the wind on his hands and the grass at his feet. His perception deepens and he includes the child in his translucent understanding. His wife's insane jealousy mounts, and he withdraws from her to protect three treasures, his contemplation, the marvel of his one night with the exotic actress, and, above

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all, his daughter. The character of Aurelio is so vibrant that everything gains in value because of him, and the book is rich with merit up to the time when it switches over to tell of the girl Maria. Then it lessens somewhat in interest. Carmela's ill will against her daughter is so great that Aurelio sends the young girl to stay in Granada with an aunt. Here is introduced Andrés, a waif from a foundling hospital, who is singing indecent songs in a low cabaret. He meets Maria and they become lovers. The actress Maravilla, now denuded by age and effort, appears and recognizes in Andrés her son by Aurelio. Aurelio comes down from the mountain to find his treasured daughter pregnant with the child of his unknown son. His wisdom knows how to receive even this, but Andrés deserts Maria and runs away to the success his mother can promise him in Madrid. Then Aurelio tries to soften the fate of his daughter. He returns to his village, tells Carmela, whose latent madness bursts out in a charge of having stolen her child from her at birth and substituted the child of the actress. She forbids him to bring the girl back to the house. He gathers the violent, dangerous woman up in his arms, holds her long to still her; in doing so smothers her, and so gains for Maria the shelter she needs. The book is admirably written, and the matter has great vitality.

Mr. Irving Stone's *Lust for Life* has two disadvantages. It is a life of Vincent Van Gogh presented as fiction, and it is frequently overwritten. Yet the temptation to an extravagant use of words must have been great when describing so dynamic and driven a man as this famous Dutch painter, and Mr. Stone assures us that, apart from the conversations, his book is founded on fact. He travelled for a year visiting each of the places where Van Gogh lived, talking to the people who knew him, and he had of

course that astounding collection of seven hundred letters written by Vincent Van Gogh to his brother Theo. *Lust for Life* will doubtless make many people read those letters, or if three volumes of letters is more than many care for, then the high spicing of fiction is perhaps rightly used to spread wider the fame of a greatly gifted man. Van Gogh's simple goodness is as impressive as his passion in painting. The record of the two together is at times overwhelming, and one reads with something near to reverence. The first few chapters, which tell of Van Gogh's time in the Goupil galleries in London, are the poorest. He has an unhappy love affair and, refusing to flatter the wealthy clients, he leaves the gallery and returns to his Dutch home. All through his life he seemed to fail again and again, and yet his apparent failure was always the result of loyally adhering to his own burning view of truth. He became a preacher in a Dutch mining village and shared the terrible conditions of the miners, going without food or bed in order to help an oppressed people, and in the end feeling he could not name God to those who lived in such a Hell. It was in the mining town of Petit Wasmes that he first began drawing. Anton Mauve the painter was his cousin, his uncle Vincent Van Gogh was a wealthy art dealer, and Theo his devoted brother was with Goupil's in Paris. So when Van Gogh went to the Hague to study art his work was seen by the best judges. They all found it strangely real, but odd and unsaleable. Theo sent him money which went in paints, or in doctor's bills for the faded prostitute he took as his wife; he lived without food, borrowing that he might have the bare essentials for his work, doubted by all, caring for the poor creature who depended on him, and possessed by an unflagging creative fury. He painted from dawn to dark, in wind and rain.

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Everything he did was sent to Theo, but nothing could be sold. Everyone urged him to conform to the laws of painting, respectability, public taste, and self-respecting independence. With sweetness, selflessness and intensity he continued to live by his own insight. He joined his brother in Paris and was accepted by the great impressionists, all of whom were Theo's friends. Their work opened his eyes to the traditional gloom of his own colour. He went to Arles, and in that blaze of terrifying light, painting without any protection from the burning sun, often without food, he worked in a frenzy of new vision. Small wonder that the strain of creation, the sun, past years of starvation, ended in fits of madness. But even madness was a momentary rift in the integrity of his nature. It is impossible to say whether his work among the miners or his work to interpret nature and man as his inspiration revealed them has more of sublimity, but Mr. Stone tells of both with due recognition of the greatness of his subject, and one would do well to follow him in his profound appreciation of Vincent Van Gogh as man and artist.

In *We Have Come to a Country* Lettice Cooper tells of a Centre for Unemployment in a North Country town. It is an objective account of things as they might look to a practical-minded person. There is no theory to push facts out of shape, nor is there any transmutation of the artist's mind that gives deeper meaning to the ordinary event. If a social worker told briefly of her work it would be interesting and informing, and so is this book, but possibly a short article on the difficulties of running an Unemployment Centre would have said as much. Mrs. Buck started the Centre, and it is well that her type should be noted and tabulated as one to avoid; large-hatted and busted, gracious as lava, ebullient on platforms, where she admits under self-imposed pres-

sure that the credit is due to her. These aggressive schooner women are well known in social work, and Miss Cooper had done Mrs. Buck brown. The unemployed men are glad that the Centre at least offers them a place where they can sit down, but they feel fools when taught to make rugs, are too honest to be easily patronized, and are not children to be chided and spoiled. The men are justly if not strikingly recorded. Lorna Tremayne is the wife of a Professor at the University, and she is one of the leisured women who help at the Centre. Her husband is a timid pedagogue, and as she has some romantic love which she has lacked opportunity to put to use she lets it ignite on meeting Alick Fosdick, the Centre's Secretary. It is difficult to say why Alick should have set it alight, except that as he had been drifting about France at the expense of a wealthy woman he must have had the manners of diversion. This 'love' does not make any difference to the story. Alick wants to be spoiled as his mother spoiled him in childhood, and the wealthy woman offering to do it once more, it is she who gets him. Miss Cooper shares with many other novelists a working knowledge of psychology, and she presents Alick rather like a case paper; every once in a while measuring him with analytical formula to see that he still squares. The book is a straightforward account of usual people which will doubtless prove interesting to many readers.

*Round Trip* is the story of a Baltimore newspaper photographer. He is so hard-boiled that at first one feels aversion. The slick, knowing slang which is used is a vocabulary to be guessed at, while the reader marvels at what is drunk – a Swiss Itch is one of the things – reels before the amount swilled down, and is utterly stumped at licence that is too bald to be anything but amazing. Yet these American guys are innocent, modest

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and young, young, young. The book should be read for the picture it gives of one side of American life. It resembles the confidences of a tough *amœba*, but Mr. Tracy has a sure touch, and as he makes his hero tell of a fight which ends in a death, the murder trial that follows, a pregnancy, a birth and a motor accident, there is a disarming naturalness, a touching sentiment that proves the book to be well written and its startling idiom most cleverly handled.

THE MERCENARIES OF THE HELLENISTIC WORLD. By G. T. GRIFFITH. Cambridge University Press. 16s.

MR. GRIFFITH'S scholarly work is a valuable supplement to the book Mr. Parke published in 1933 on 'Greek mercenary soldiers.' Mr. Parke's admirable work ended with the Battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. Mr. Griffith pursues the subject through the Hellenistic Age, taking in West as well as East, describing, for example, not only the mercenaries who took part in the strife of Alexander's successors, and the wars of Pergamum and Pontus, but those whose revolt and its terrible consequences are familiar to readers of Flaubert's *Salammbô* and those who marched into Italy behind Hannibal. His study takes us in fact over the whole Græco-Roman world. He discusses the sources of supply, the arrangements for recruiting, the relative value of different races, and the social and economic problems that lie behind these facts. Recruiting was sometimes arranged by diplomatic methods. The Gauls were brought into Asia by an arrangement with Nicomedes of Bithynia; the Seleucids obtained Jewish mercenaries through the good offices of the chief priest of Jerusalem. In some cases treaties were drawn up. Mr. Griffith gives instances from Crete and Rhodes. For some time there was a regular depôt at Tænarum where you

could buy mercenaries as you bought slaves at Delos. The Carians were the first mercenaries. At one time the Peloponnesus was the chief source (the Arcadians had the same kind of reputation as the Swiss in the fifteenth century); at others the Cretans, the Gauls and the Thracians were the favourites. Mr. Griffith gives vivid accounts of the history of some of these mercenary bodies, as for example, of a force of Gauls that entered the service of Carthage in Sicily, tried to sack one city and to betray another, and then deserted to the Romans, who disarmed them at the end of the war and forbade them ever to enter Italy. More important is the history of the Greek mercenaries who had served under Alexander. Alexander, threatened by the revolt of Harpalus, ordered his governors to dismiss the mercenaries they had enlisted, and about the same time he issued his famous edict ordering Greek cities to take back their exiles. In consequence a great mass of disbanded soldiers streamed across Asia, including doubtless many whom he had meant to settle there as a Hellenising influence. Leosthenes, one of the mercenary leaders whose name has survived, collected them and organized them into an army, which he led north for the Lamian war.

Mr. Toynbee in his *Study of History* encourages us to look at civilization as a continual play of challenge and response. The history of the mercenaries falls neatly into his pattern. For the conditions that produced the supply and employment of mercenaries in the Greek world were very much the same as those that produced the supply and employment of mercenaries in the Middle Ages. The Greek cities of the first age were no better able than the Italian cities of the second to compose their quarrels and create a political unit that would correspond to their economic needs, or enable them to hold their own against powerful



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enemies. The use of mercenaries in any serious sense begins with the great unsettlement that followed the Peloponnesian War. The inter-State strife of Greece produced distress and disorder ; the inter-class strife produced bodies of exiles, ready for service against their own cities. Alexander sought to achieve the great political success that the Greeks had missed, but his death destroyed his scheme, and the Battle of Ipsus with the defeat of Antigonos, who had tried to carry out Alexander's scheme, as Tarn puts it, definitely decided that the Græco-Roman world could not be held together. That world presently returned to its old political shape, though under different rulers and a different civilization. The use of mercenaries was like piracy, a disease of the age ; a symptom of its weakness. The mercenaries were at once effect and cause of poverty and distress ; effect, because they were men whose idleness or whose animosities had been created by economic and political strife ; cause, because resources that should have been used on productive purposes were spent on armaments in this form.

Creighton's *History of the Papacy* gives a picture of conditions remarkably like those under which mercenaries became common in the Greek and Hellenistic worlds. Italy, like Greece, was torn between its different city States ; and faction was just as active. There are differences, of course, between the mercenaries of the two ages, but the conditions that produced them are very similar.

And as mercenaries and pirates were the disease of an unsettled world, they disappear when the task that the Greeks never undertook was achieved successfully by the Romans. The Roman Empire in its turn developed the same diseases when it began to break up. Rostovtzeff shows that in the third century Gallienus and his successors made

great use of mercenaries carefully selected from the least civilized tribes of the Empire, Illyrians, Thracians, Arabs, Moors, Britons ; and he describes the important change that this produced in the character of the Roman army and the Roman Empire. There is one respect in which the modern world has reproduced the conditions that created mercenaries in the past. The Great War is to Europe what the Peloponnesian War was to Greece, and three great States have been through the same kind of internal strife that was common in the Greek cities. But the only exiles that can be compared with the exiles from the Greek cities are the forces of White Russians to be found in Manchuria and China.

DERBY DAY. By A. EDWARD NEWTON  
Dickson and Thompson. 15s.

MR. NEWTON is well known in two continents as one of the most genial of bookmen ; and by those who find mere book-lore rather limited in appeal, he and his books are treasured because he has an unfailing aptitude for moving from the library to the living-room, or for making a living-room of the library. His new volume is as readable and as pleasant as its predecessors. The chapters on things English, especially on men and affairs in London, are perhaps the best, because Mr. Newton possesses that fine gift of discovery which marks the intelligent American in England. Here he is at home, precisely because he is a good American, not a thin-blooded expatriate who hopes to find life less trouble this side of the Atlantic. There is a delightful chapter, informed as well as gossipy, on Johnson's house in Gough Square ; and this is equalled for charm and enjoyment by the longer chapter on the Biontés and their country. When Mr. Newton goes out adventuring in London he takes us to places familiar or little known, but he never fails to find

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something fresh, whether he is watching the Thames at Charing Cross or Wapping, or remembering the buildings which once graced Piccadilly. In this essay he gives us the heartening news that he is 'going to start a Trollope society very soon to grub-stake a much-needed complete and uniform set of his novels.' It is certainly time that lovers of the Barchester series should be able to buy other books—*Orley Farm*, *The Eustace Diamonds*, the Phineas books—in other than pocket editions which, though pleasant, necessarily are printed in a type rather small for all but very good eyesight.

There are essays, too, on things and persons American: once more the reader with a sense of history will be struck by the resemblance between American civilization and that of Imperial Rome, as he reads Mr. Newton's account of his visit to Mr. Randolph Hearst's ranch. The absurd arrogance of the way of living, the tasteless and vulgar extravagance recall acutely the life and manners of Trimalchio in Petronius' satire. Mr. Newton was taken to see Mr. Hearst's place by a friend who comments thus on the journey:

'That is the port of San Simeon and there is the railway station. When Mr. Hearst sees anything he wants, he buys it and sends it here. If it fits into his scheme, he uses it; if it doesn't, he puts it in storage. There are his warehouses.'

On his host's peculiar taste in newspapers, and his willingness to debauch the public and mislead American opinion, Mr. Newton writes:

'Let it be understood that I do not care for Mr. Hearst's newspapers, or his methods, but then I doubt if their owner himself likes his newspapers; and as for his methods, he might, possibly, condescend to ask you what other methods would give him what he seeks? He wants "circula-

tion," for the reason that it gives him power and wealth. The commoner his papers are, — he owns twenty-five or thirty of them, — the more people he can bend to his will. Mr. Hearst could run for his own edification a newspaper which it would delight me to subscribe to and read, but what would its influence be? Absolutely nil.'

Such opinions, coming from a man with a real love of culture, make one despair. They are not even true. In the long run *The New Republic* and *The Nation* have a profounder influence on American opinion than all Mr. Hearst's papers. It is cowardice such as is shown by Mr. Newton which is ruining journalism in America. The greed for great wealth, the passion for quick and large returns on capital, the treachery to ideals betrayed by men who pay them lip-service — all these too easily escape the denunciation they deserve. That Mr. Newton should consent to be Mr. Hearst's guest is his own affair: that he should write of him with respect, that he should, without contumely or scorn, appear to subscribe to the man's degraded and degrading motives, is a treachery to the cause of culture. Barbarians should be left to enjoy the society suited to them.

A LONDON CHILD OF THE SEVENTIES.  
By M. VIVIAN HUGHES. Oxford University Press: Milford. 6s.

MRS. HUGHES has an enviably sundial disposition. The youngest child and only girl of a family of four, she may have been spoiled, as a kitten might be spoiled, but she was always treated as a definitely inferior animal to the boys.

I came last in all distributions of food at table, treats of sweets, and so on. I was expected to wait on the boys, run messages, fetch things left upstairs, and never grumble, let alone

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refuse. All this I thoroughly enjoyed, because I love running about, and would often dash up and down stairs just to let off my spirits.

When she writes about London pleasures or excitements she states quite placidly about Lord Mayor's Day, 'Needless to say, I never saw the Show myself. The boys always went . . .,' and of the Agricultural Hall, in the seventies a great place of entertainment, 'of course I was never allowed to go there myself'; or finally: 'Strange as it seems I was never taken to anything more exciting than a picture gallery, not even to a pantomime at Christmas. Not even to the Tower or the Crystal Palace or Madame Tussaud's.' Something of the equanimity with which little Molly Thomas regarded these deprivations is characteristic of this book. It is a rarely enchanting chronicle. To those familiar with Islington when it had only just ceased to be a village this story of nine years (1870-1879) in Canonbury Park will have an exceptional interest; but the book should appeal almost as strongly to all who wish to have an unaffected, cheerful record of middle-class life in a London suburb of the proper Victorian days.

Mrs. Hughes' father was a stock-broker, and had his periods of depression - depression of finance only, not of spirits. Her mother was a Vivian from Cornwall, and the book's charm is never more attractive than in the chapters treating of holidays in distant Reskadinnick in the days when the journey from Paddington to Camborne took all of twelve hours. There, in conditions incredibly primitive - no sanitation, no bath-room, and no open air at night time - yet no worse apparently for health than our modern habits, the Thomas children enjoyed a complete change, of a kind to-day hardly possible, from the ways of London. At Penponds, in the little church, the atmosphere was still that of the eigh-

teenth century - 'the old chap would gabble through the alternate verses of the Psalms as fast as he could, followed by the hurried mumblings of the little congregation.' This was a violent contrast from the dignified reverence of Sunday at St. Paul's Cathedral, which the family attended when in London, walking 'by side streets, short cuts by the New River, along parts of Essex Road, the City Road, Goswell Road, and Aldersgate, and finally past "the highest point of London," in Panyer Alley to the north door of the cathedral.'

The book's peculiar success, however, lies in its evocation of family and school life, whether she writes of her eldest brother at Shrewsbury or her younger ones at Merchant Taylors, or her own time at the odd academy in Highbury; whether she is telling of cricket and broken windows - the great Charlie Absalom was a friend of her father's - or of more secret family games, of callers and their ways, of relatives pleasant or difficult, of the old London 'buses or the more rarely used hansom-cabs, of the jobbing stable round the corner, and all the dangerous delights of London - once her youngest brother was lost for three days - Mrs. Hughes writes with rare freshness, unfailing sweetness and conveys to the reader her own sense of courage and happiness.

~~Crossed out~~  
PETER WARLOCK. By CECIL GRAY. Cape. 10s. 6d.

'NOT I, BUT THE WIND . . .' By FRIEDA LAWRENCE. Heinemann. 10s. 6d.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. By J. M. MURRY. Cape. 10s. 6d.

MR. MURRY has been unfortunate in taking as his title the old tag from Matthew Arnold; for it immediately suggests to the reader how frightfully inferior is his little group of introspectives to the sturdy Victorians whom they affect to condemn or try to psycho-analyse. For

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Matthew Arnold the tragedy of his time consisted in the condition of two worlds – ‘one dead, the other powerless to be born.’ He shared, no doubt, in the *Weltschmerz* of which he talked, and found his genius hampered by his circumstances; but it was the world he was worried about, not himself. How pitiful beside him and his earnest endeavours for improvement appear the three protagonists of these books, Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock), D. H. Lawrence and Mr. Murry himself! Even in the dreadful upheaval of the war their expressed concern is precisely with the war’s interference with their own comfort and their own careers. This terrible, almost insane vanity was seen at its worst during the Lawrences’ and the Murrys’ residence, during the war, in Cornwall. Then, when submarines were scaring the Cornish, when nerves of civilians and soldiers (many of them, by the wisdom of the War Office, boys from the North Country towns) were riddled to pieces on that bleak Atlantic coast, Lawrence was infuriated because he and his wife were asked to leave. Lawrence’s time in Cornwall ought to be sufficient to kill the absurd legend that he had a particular sympathy with peasants. The Cornish neither understood nor liked him. They were polite, but they distrusted his violent emotion and his over-expressive affection as much as Mr. Murry seems to have done. Lawrence was no peasant. He was essentially of the white-collar lower middle-class, who had no use for the peasants except to improve them: unimproved he detested them, as can plainly be seen in his books on Italy, Sardinia and Mexico. He never rid himself of that class-consciousness which is lacking in the peasant or the aristocrat; and his missionary efforts did not differ essentially from those of the Boy Scout leader, the group-cheerer or the crank prophets of Hyde Park.

Only the man was a genius. That is the excuse, presumably, for all the writing about him by those who loved and those who loathed him. The one most faithful in her love, most childishly uncritical of him, whether he is writing poetry or nonsense, breaking heads or painting pictures, has now written her recollections of her husband. It is a shapeless, inchoate book, influenced too often by Lawrence’s own jargon; but it is – except for the pages about Miss Brett – sweet-tempered, placid, kindly and forgiving. Mrs. Lawrence, after all, has the laugh over the hysterical women and the neurotic youths who interfered with her married life by their injudicious rites: she had Lawrence. That is what made so many of them so furious. And it *was* infuriating. Here was this man, talking about the dark masculine power, insisting arrogantly on profound phallic force, himself the complete slave of his wife, hopelessly henpecked by a Prussian aristocrat. What was the use of his sudden impotent rages, his plate-smashing, his insults and his temper? They were all brushed aside or broken by this woman’s assurance; and in the end Lawrence always returned to an allegiance he could not successfully forsake. He dramatized his married life with theatrical effect, talked a great deal of clotted bosh about the ‘sympathy of pure hatred,’ and scared Mr. Murry into paralysed inertia and disgusted Katherine Mansfield by his attacks on his wife. So here Mrs. Lawrence gives us her portrait of him. She is not a very sensitive or imaginative woman – such a one could not have put up with Lawrence as he was – but she is intelligent in her way, and proud, as she well may be, of having for so many years nursed a genius so that he could get through an amount of work that might well stagger a healthy man to perform.

In Mr. Gray’s *Life of Philip Heseltine* we are in much the same atmosphere,

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as well as often among the same people, as in Mrs. Lawrence's and Mr. Murry's books. Here the note is shriller, the genius slighter, the ill-temper more waspish; but there is the same angry exacerbation at the world, the same whining note of self-commiseration, the same feverish quarrels. Heseltine passed from ardent discipleship to grave distrust of Lawrence; and in this book what he wrote in letters, what Mr. Nichols writes and some of Mr. Gray's own passages should do much towards destroying the fable that Lawrence, who never had an original idea, was a profound thinker. Heseltine himself was a sad, disillusioned creature, only expressing himself happily in his music: too much of this record of his life is taken up with small private affairs, and trivial family jokes. It is, however, a readable book, and will be necessary to students of early twentieth-century Bohemian society.

More than once in his autobiography Mr. Murry refers to his passiveness: and certainly this record of his life up to the end of the war is almost exclusively composed of evidence of his extreme suggestibility, his narrow insensitiveness, and his alarming lack of humour and common sense. Too often there is a confusion between 'susceptible' and 'sensitive'; and Mr. Murry has put us all in his debt by this elaborate and long analysis of a character which, if we judge it from his own account, was an extreme example of how these two characteristics can be completely divorced from one another. The susceptible man is acutely aware of how things and people affect him: whether he shrinks or enjoys, the whole world is judged by its effect on his feelings. The sensitive man, while he is more genuinely susceptible than his opposite, is acutely aware of other people and of things as he affects them. One would hesitate to trespass on the life between Mr. Murry and Katherine Mans-

field did he not himself invite us to witness intimacies of joy and sorrow not generally flung open to the public. Even so, one must hesitate; and no friend of Katherine Mansfield, that keen, sensitive, ironic and pitiful spirit, can help being distressed at Mr. Murry's probing exposure of his stupidity and crass unimaginativeness in his treatment of his wife. His portrait of her emerges: there she sits, grave, tender, understanding, forgiving, ashamed, disgusted, heart-broken, defiant and beautifully courageous while so many of her friends dance around poor Lawrence's Baalim, cutting themselves with knives, exultantly torturing themselves, screaming, moaning in a scorpion-like torment of self-pity. Too often Mr. Murry was with them rather than with her. He calls himself coward for one act of desertion; but even now he doesn't seem to realize the vain brutality of his treatment of her, after her brother's death in battle. He groans about his exile from England, when he is in France with her; but seems never to have considered for a minute her exile from her own country, and the unconscious pull of New Zealand which is so clearly felt in her stories.

No one need argue that Katherine Mansfield was easy to live with; and no one can presume to judge Mr. Murry for his failure. It is his own account of the *kind* of failure which shocks the reader; his inability to realize that, in accepting the love of this genius, he was under an obligation to carry on, in spite of all difficulties, all opposition, even Katherine Mansfield's own. He draws a heart-breaking picture of a woman demanding assurance, demanding encouragement to believe in the validity of their love, to have her moods of despair and distrust dissipated by a husband's straightforward appeal to trust and honour.

Very early in the book, with that meek complacency which, if Mr. Murry

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cares to know, is the reason why so many people look on him with disfavour, he 'thanks his stars' that he was not taught the Christian religion. The gratitude is the measure of how little he yet understands his own character. Had he been taught, not necessarily the Christian religion, but any coherent system of philosophy as applied to life, he would not to-day be bombinating so hollowly, like a lost curate in a chapel stripped of its furniture. By far the best part of this book – except, it need hardly be said, for magical snatches from Katherine Mansfield's letters – is the early chapters, especially that on his life, on an Oxford vacation, in a farm on Stow-on-the-Wold. Here, for once, is Mr. Murry the extravert, enjoying simply, talking simply, living with real people who base their lives not on opinions, but on ideas. After that chapter we go paddling miserably with the author through the shallows of adolescent passion, adolescent art and adolescent opinion; watch him the bond-slave of Frank Harris who, nine years earlier, was an obvious enough old buck of a charlatan, falling in love or being pulled in rather, a crab with no shell, yet with an uneasy sense that shells were being worn. Early he was given the opportunity of criticizing literature and what a blessed thing it would have been had he kept to that, a task at which before he joined the dervishes, he often excelled.

In the account of his and Katherine's relations with Lawrence, Mr. Murry covers old ground: his Lawrence is rather blacker, more sinister here, and Mr. Murry still suffers from the illusion that Lawrence was a thinker, the embryo, at least, of a philosopher. The mistake is natural enough, for evidently he cherishes the same illusion about himself. A man with a great facility in writing, with a wide knowledge of what has been written, and occasionally an uncanny power to seize the thought of great men

(this is shown in his work on Dostoevsky and on Keats) can often deceive himself into believing that he is a thinker, merely because he goes, without the material, through the processes of thought. Mr. Murry is really a simple religious man who has never done what he might have because he has never surrendered himself to a religion, and seems incapable of understanding what that surrender is. He has neither the pride of the infidel, nor the humility of the religious or of the simple agnostic; he has rather the pride which pretends to humility and is apt to think he has the right and authority to judge and condemn others (and they grateful for it) because he assures us he utters his sentence from the body of the court and not from the bench.

THE POST-WAR WORLD. By J. HAMPDEN JACKSON. Gollancz. 6s.

MR. J. HAMPDEN JACKSON undertakes to tell the political story of the years 1918 to 1934 in as lively a style as may be expected of a historian of our times; and he shows a new and remarkable sense of proportion. He gives Russia her full share of space and devotes to the rest of Europe about half as much space as to the other continents. Perhaps he ought not to have left out thirteen European countries altogether. But then he is certainly sinning on the right side; the fate of Europe will probably be decided, for the next two-score of years or so, beyond the great waters. The chapters about Turkey, Japan, China, and South America are particularly good reading. Will they improve the readers' minds as much as they interest them?

This depends chiefly on whether the author's assertions about facts are trustworthy. To test Mr. Jackson's trustworthiness an examination of his treatment of one country, Germany, will suffice. Here are some corrections of

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major and minor mistakes committed by Mr. Jackson. Germany did *not* lose 'most of her coal' by the treaty of Versailles, but only a comparatively small part of it, and has suffered for more than ten years from a glut of unsaleable coal. Not the 'left or minority wing' of the Social Democratic Party wanted a Soviet republic at the end of 1918; that party wanted nothing of the kind. The author mixes it up with the Independent Social Democratic Party which was at daggers drawn with the Social Democratic Party and was not able to govern in coalition with it for more than eleven days. Walther Rathenau was not the founder of the 'Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft,' but his father Emil. Walther was only his unlucky and unhappy heir. It was not the Young, but the Dawes, Plan which fixed the sum of the German reparation debts at \$25,000,000,000. Germany never took Shantung from China, but only a very small peninsula of it, Kiao Chou. The sugar supply in Germany failed long before the Poles got Posen; when they had it, a glut of unsaleable sugar developed rather soon again. The loss of the wealth of the middle class was not a result of the stabilization of the mark, but of the previous inflation; the stabilization even restored partly the old condition of things. The general strike which threw down the Luttwitz-Kapp upheaval in 1920 was ordered by the Government and led by the trade unions, the Social Democratic and, in some parts of Germany, by the Communist Party. Jews were *not* dismissed from public offices before the Hitler Government. Von Hindenburg 'had' *not* 'to confer the chancellorship on Hitler'; he did it by his own free will and his action was a betrayal of his electors. The Lutheran Church has never been compelled to refrain from preaching against Nazism; it never tried to. Germany did not lack food in 1932 or later, so far; in 1933

she had a large unsaleable surplus of grains. Maybe Hitler 'did, what he could,' to relieve distress; if so, then he certainly could not do so nearly so much as the republican *régime* had done before. Rural settlement was started under the republic; it totally stopped with Hitler's *régime* and has not been resumed, so far.

Other mistakes show, not only how totally mistaken is Mr. Jackson's view of Germany, but how his mistakes distort his own judgment and mislead his readers. To a certain extent he is the victim of Fascist propaganda. He repeats the untruthful stories about the occupation of the Ruhr territory in 1923. Not *ten* million people were idle then and there; the district had about two million inhabitants, and the number of all unemployed cannot have been more than *one* million at the outside. No proof has ever been given for the venomous allegation that 'the French encouraged their Zouave and Senegalese troops in breaches of discipline at the expense of the inhabitants' The reason of the occupation of the Ruhr by Allied (not only French) troops was not inevitable lateness in delivery of iron, but of telegraph poles, which the Cuno Government deliberately refused; they wished to try how far they might go in obstructing the treaty.

At other places Mr. Jackson repeats Communist propaganda equally uncritically. Allied pressure had nothing to do with the breakdown of the Communist upheavals in Berlin in 1918 and 1919. The great majority of the working class stood up against them. The January rising of the Communists in Berlin in 1919 was not 'followed by a fortnight of terror.' Terror was used (against terrorists) for three or four days; then normal methods for the repression of armed sedition were employed. And rarely was it more justified than when so-called Communists tried to upset the republic just founded by Socialists, and

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so spoiled the first democratic elections by kindling a flare of fear in the hearts of all the women who for the first time went to the polling booths. It is absolutely untrue that then 'the industrial workers' wished to have a Soviet State; only a very small, undisciplined, brutal and chicken-hearted minority did so. The 'Bavarian Soviet' the author speaks of was neither Bavarian nor a Soviet; it is a gross overstatement to say that the White Terror which followed the Communist republic at Munich in May, 1919, cost 'the lives of thousands of workers.' The exact number has been found out by a careful German statistician, who was certainly no enemy of the Communists; it is much smaller, and a large part of the victims were not workers. The number of workers killed then may have been 200; terrible enough, but not so terrible as Mr. Jackson asks us to believe.

Equally inexact is the author's information about the Hitler *régime*. The Reichstag was *not* 'burned to the ground'; very little damage, not much even visible from the outside, was really done. The Nazis did *not* win a 'record majority' at the elections of March 5th, 1933, not even a majority at all. That many Communists were tortured is a flagrant understatement; many were killed; and so were many Socialists, Catholics, Jews, Pacificists, Democrats, even Conservatives not only tortured or brought into concentration camps, but foully murdered.

The chief importance of these mistakes lies in the fact that they are so numerous and that they help to buttress the opinion of the author that in times of emergency democracy is obviously unable to keep the social engine going, that only dictatorship can do that. Mr. Jackson seems to lay more stress on the principle of dictatorship than on its particular political allegiance, though

here and there a slight preference for its Bolshevist form seems to loom through in his text.

It is certainly early to judge about the achievements of the Nazi *régime* at all. The only possibility then is to say what they have done on the most important fields, how they behave in domestic and foreign policy and trade; how they influence religion, art, literature; what they did for or against different classes; whether they stand for peace and disarmament or for war and armaments; whether they keep international treaties or treat them as mere scraps of paper; what became of the rights of the citizen, particularly the worker, and of his standard of living; whether and how they influenced the distribution of incomes; how they treat women and children; etc. On these problems Mr. Jackson has nothing to say; he gives some wrong statements from other fields, important chiefly for judging the years of transition, and then tries to sweep us away with a judgment so high-handed that it is really nearly empty of any substance.

Mr. Jackson's bias is not at all, as he hopes, unobtrusive; and this is a good thing. As it is, one knows that he is favouring dictatorship in times of emergency, though one certainly cannot see from the facts he reports the reason for this preference.

Democracy has many drawbacks; some of them particularly cumbersome in times of crises; the worst of them the slowness of decisions and the disinclination to do something thoroughly. Democracy is a moral postulate; it is certainly, from the viewpoint of social technique, only a makeshift. But to admit this and to overlook the very serious drawbacks of other politically possible systems is a grave error in a political writer. Mr. Jackson tries to show that in times of emergency criminality, gangsterism, the methods of the slaughterhouse, are saving



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factors. But it does not come off. Not even he can persuade us that Italy, Poland, Germany are not deep in the throes of the slump, much deeper than this country.

MEN NEVER KNOW. By VICKI BAUM. Bles. 7s. 6d.

THE MAKER OF SIGNS. By WHIT BURNET. Cape. 7s. 6d.

THE DARING YOUNG MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE. By WILLIAM SAROYAN. Faber. 7s. 6d.

MY NEXT BRIDE. By KAY BOYLE. Faber. 7s. 6d.

APPOINTMENT IN SAMARRA. By JOHN O'HARA. Faber. 7s. 6d.

THE UNPOSSESSED. By TESS SLESINGER. Barker. 7s. 6d.

THE APPLE OF CONCORD. By RICHARD CHURCH. Dent. 7s. 6d.

MEN OF GOOD WILL: BOOK VII. *The Lonely*. By JULES ROMAINS. Dickson. 7s. 6d.

NOTHING is so destructive of beauty as is *chic*. and it is a great temptation to competent craftsmen to abandon technique, with its labour of appropriate application, for *chic*, which dresses all mankind in a fashion, whether or not it is suitable. In the past the French, with such notable exceptions as Balzac, were among novelists most liable to this temptation, and we welcomed the Russians and praised our own great men because they did not yield to it. To-day *chic* is everywhere; and of these books, novels and short stories, four are sad examples of the dominance of irrelevant fashion. Vicki Baum wears her style most easily; but she is not an author who is capable of much depth, and this trifling novel of mental infidelity and casual luxury would be none the better were it a little less consciously gowned. It is different with Mr. Burnet, Mr. Saroyan and Miss Boyle. Were they only a little less

conscious of their manner, a little simpler in presentation, forgetful of lipstick and rouge (for those who do not use these aids are defiantly conscious in their lack of cosmetic) their work would be very much better. Mr. Burnet and Mr. Saroyan are short-story writers: each has a good eye, and Mr. Burnet has a good ear—his tales, especially of Paris, have penetration as well as observation. Mr. Saroyan writes stories like essays, and essays like stories: he declares that he does not believe 'there is really such a thing as a poem-form, a story-form or a novel-form. I believe there is man only.' Which is like saying 'I don't believe there are trousers or skirts or stockings: only men.' Actually, as one would expect, Mr. Saroyan is very aware of the form in which he professes disbelief: and the artful simplicity of his form occasionally produces very attractive results. Miss Boyle has no intention of indulging in incredulity about her wardrobe. The fashions in *My Next Bride* are less extravagant, less deceptive in their artifice than were those in *Gentlemen, I Address you Privately*; but Miss Boyle is still painfully preoccupied with the details of dressing her story. It is a pity, because Virginia, new to Paris and to Par-American, is an attractive creature, as are also the mild, kindly Sorrel and the two fantastic Dickensian creatures, the Russian refugee countesses. There is richness in this novel, and humour; but what a pity that Miss Boyle must so elaborate their expression!

Not that a conscious, elaborate style need be an enemy to the artist. Those who wear a fashion, not because everybody's doing it, but because it suits them, can find help in any artifice. Mr. O'Hara and Miss Slesinger each has a highly artificial style and their novels are by far the best we have had from America for some years. Technically, Mr. O'Hara's is the greater novel.

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There is an assurance in treatment, a splendid competence, an amazing correlation of the means used with the result achieved which put Mr. O'Hara straightway into the first rank of novelists writing in English. He has chosen a grim, unpleasant subject; his America is of the years towards the end of Prohibition; his people are mostly men and women with no roots, no ideals and no standards – except those of the road-house, the speak-easy and the petting-party. The exceptions never think of any effective resistance to the horrible, meaningless manners of their companions. This tragedy of Julian English, gentleman, drunkard and sensualist, and of his wife, an idealist sans ideals, is made infinitely more tragic by its setting against the crowd of eager, vital, kindly animals with whose chorus it is played. With all Mr. O'Hara's sardonic wit, there is a grave sanity. Here is a huge advance on Scott Fitzgerald's stories of a society superficially like: Mr. O'Hara – whether or no he is a professing Catholic – has the realistic attitude of the Catholic towards the sins of mankind. Not that his novel is a tract or a sermon: he portrays his people, and if they are exposed, they expose themselves. It is a novel, this, with little reticence and with the barriers down, but the irreticence is the characters', not the author's; and it is they who, in their desperate accidie, fling down the barriers by which men with standards guard their souls save in the beneficent secrecy of the confessional. The author is free of this country of desolation: unlike Mr. Faulkner who suffers with his creatures, or Julian Green who explores his limbo and edge of hell from some strange intellectual leasehold of his own, Mr. O'Hara is out of the pit, at once more removed and more sympathetic.

The publisher's encomium of Miss Slesinger's startling and admirable novel is reminiscent of the old lyric 'I threw a

blurb into the air. It may have a meaning, but I know not where.' This book, pronounced to be 'the work of an honest mind devoted to the task of inspiring hope in a generation which must be heartily sick of being "debunked"', is actually the cutest piece of debunking that has appeared for some years. It is hard to say whom Miss Slesinger treats with the greatest contumely, the vain, self-conscious amorist of a novelist or the futile young Communists who can puncture his self-sufficiency, but – they can be excused on the score of youth – have nothing but flowers for their own. The scene of *The Unpossessed* is New York, more narrowly a university, presumably Columbia. The protagonists are Bruno Leonard, and Miles Flinders and his wife. Miss Slesinger spares neither them nor her reader in her exposure of the futility, the hopeless, casual foolishness of these would-be instructors of the young. Leonard is a professor: Flinders is in a store, and hopes to help Leonard in the work of a magazine which is to give new life to youth – then youth breaks in. Half-baked, eager, ignorant young people – one of whom has wealthy parents, who are expected to subsidize the magazine. The longest and most gorgeous chapter in the book is that of the party held by Merle Middleton in aid of the magazine. The whole book is written at a breakneck speed, and New York of the moment is caught and pinned for us in its heat and hurry and busy indolence. No one gets anywhere, and no one starts from anywhere: and the final chapter in a nursing-home to which Mrs. Flinders has gone for an abortion is a dreadful symbol of the sterility of the society portrayed. Miss Slesinger has wit, and her laughter is quiet and terrible; her story is less perfect than *Meeting at Samarra*, but it is better as a general picture of American society as typified in New York.

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With *The Apple of Concord* Mr. Richard Church comes into his own as a novelist. Very likely the exciting spiritual and dramatic quality of this book will not receive due recognition, as Mr. Church happens to be an English instead of a foreign novelist. His story of Gregory Wade has that rare atmosphere of a life lived on two planes, an atmosphere more commonly found in Russian than English fiction. Wade, ill-treated, after a commercial failure, by an insensitive and faithless wife, comes to Paris as secretary to an eccentric American of great wealth. Here he becomes involved with his employer's daughters and with a friend of theirs whose brother he meets accidentally at Calais. The novel is full of incident, at times of violence: but all the action is carefully yet unobtrusively subordinate to and interpretative of the spiritual conflict which is Wade's doom and development. He is a sick man and his condition of helpless, inert despondency, obviously unnatural in a man of natural vigour, arouses the sympathy and affection of the three women. It is here Mr. Church's keen insight into human nature shows itself: rarely does a man show such knowledge of what moves a woman to affection. Wade's own development is precipitated by the misconduct of the crazy son of Farthing, the great artist, who is dying, smitten by paralysis. Some of the most touching pages of this moving story are those devoted to Farthing and his strange wife. Here is a novel of rare imaginative quality, written with the force and delicacy of a poet.

The publishers must be congratulated on having secured Mr. Gerard Hopkins as translator of the new volume of Mr. Romains' great novel. Nothing could be better than his scholarly and sensitive rendering; the only complaint to be made is that the book's title has been altered, and the change is for the worse. *The*

*Lonely* has far too absolute a connotation: *Recherchez de l'Eglise* has a much more specialized sense than is conveyed in the English title, which gives no idea of this book's theme. It is principally concerned with the two young men, Jallez and Jerphanion, and their curiosity about Free-Masonry, especially Jerphanion's wonder whether in that society can be found some substitutes for the things which can draw forth his admiration, but not demand his allegiance. As this novel proceeds, its skill, its astounding width of interest, its consummate handling of the different characters, compels ever greater and profounder gratitude. It is a wonderful piece of evocation, as well as of reconstruction. Here is Paris of the first decade of this century; here is Paris when the War is but a politician's boggy, and men are still passably free. There is no melodrama in this volume; but, seen clearly against the multifold life of Paris, are the love-affairs, the discussions, the quarrels and the tender intimacies of a group which has not hitherto played so prominent a part in the novel.

RETURN TO PHILOSOPHY. By C. E. M. JOAD. Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.

THIS is an extraordinarily irritating book. Its vulgarity is streaked with the true metaphysical passion. It is chatty, facetious, and full of what scholars call arguments *ad hominem*, and nurses, Personal Remarks: yet it has moments of noble impersonal clarity. It informs the reader, at some length, that Mr. Joad smokes pipes, owns a beard, wears his clothes till they drop off, and prefers to spend his holidays in the bosom of Nature: but it sets forth his philosophy with a grave and unself-conscious sincerity. It variegates passages of close-textured argument with disquisitions in the richer James Douglas manner upon

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Riviera-mindedness, Modern Girls, Jazz, and the Lack of Beauty in Modern Art (how pat the headlines fall!). However, the thirteenth-century acrobat who turned cartwheels before the Virgin's shrine was rewarded by the name of Our Lady's Juggler; and, following that precedent, it is only just to honour the motive of Mr. Joad's antics by the title of Philosophy's Publicity Agent

Mr. Joad, it appears, has – or had – a number of stockbroker friends who occupied their leisured later years in formulating theories of the universe, which they then submitted to him. These theories, pseudo-mystical, woolly-minded and incoherent, showed him the necessity of writing this book in defence of reason.

The first part of it is scrappy, anecdotal and diffuse. The defence is begun, in accordance with the best military traditions, by an attack upon Messrs. Freud, Jung, D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley, whom he seems to consider responsible for his friends' cosmic vapourings. It does not occur to him that though it may possibly be true to say that these gentlemen 'have combined to represent reason as the tool of the unconscious,' they have nowhere attempted to justify 'fancy religions' except perhaps as a safety valve.

Mr. Joad next enumerates the qualifications necessary to a philosopher, which he holds to be general culture, a training in logic, and an acquaintance with the work of other philosophers; and states his own belief that the ultimate values are discovered, not created, by the human mind, of which they are as independent as the fact that two and two are four. Then, characteristically, he personifies Truth, Goodness and Beauty as the dowagers of philosophy, and takes the opportunity from time to time to have a little lewd donnish fun with them.

Presently he is to be found rebuking

Mr. Huxley for his subjectivism: here, quoting Mr. Huxley's act of faith that 'more and intenser life is preferable to less and feebler life,' he proceeds to quarrel vigorously with him for saying that the indiscriminate proliferation of all living things is the supreme good. Mr. Joad is prone to be blinded by one meaning of a word to all the rest, which may account for his failure to perceive that in this context 'life' is used in the sense of inner life, the capacity for experience; but even though he may have been misled by this and by the quantitative adjective 'more,' it is curious that he should not realize that 'intenser' is an adjective of quality. This puzzling obtuseness recurs continually; as, for instance, where he quotes Mr. Huxley as saying that a balanced life is incompatible with *too much* thinking (*i.e.*, abstract speculation) and then attacks him for 'his vendetta against practical reason.' Aggressive stupidity of this kind is the more regrettable in that it weakens Mr. Joad's whole argument.

After several digressions, he resumes his theme, pointing out that the mind must be trained, both by environment and by exercise, to appreciate beauty: and asserts therefore that a man brought up in a *milieu* of 'slums, factories or villas,' and accustomed 'to the sound of loud voices, to the sight of ugly forms' will have a soul 'mean, vulgar and trivial.' This statement makes vividly apparent how artificial is Mr. Joad's profession to believe in goodness as an ultimate value: since bad æsthetic taste is perfectly compatible with holiness, and though slums may produce few artists, they are not barren of saints.

After this, however, the book begins to achieve coherence. Mr. Joad defends philosophy for its results in producing tolerance, justice, and understanding: and in itself as a clearing-house of knowledge, as an escape from the pettiness of

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everyday life, and as a means of 'keeping alive the sense of wonder and so restoring mystery to the world.' He believes that the universe is not 'all of a piece,' but that matter and mind are independent reals to be known respectively by conclusions drawn from sense-data, and by *a priori* reasoning. The progress of the human intelligence consists, in his opinion, of becoming aware of level after level of reality, and it works in a series of jumps – from sense data to their synthesis in the knowledge of physical objects: thence to 'objects of thought,' in which category he includes the knowledge of the relationship of physical objects, the knowledge of historical facts and capacity for logical reasoning: and finally from objects of thought to 'objects of value,' the direct apprehension of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. He links up these jumps of the individual mind with the process of evolution; thus, plants have sense-experience, animals are conscious of physical objects, ordinary civilized men deal with objects of thought, and artists, mystics, musicians, and philosophers occasionally break through to the world of value.

This classification is, even at first reading, suspiciously neat and orderly: it is obvious that Mr. Joad's mind is indelibly coloured by the Victorian assumption of tidy evolutionary progress. A great many objections raise themselves. The artist, for instance, is conscious of beauty incarnate in physical objects: his perception leaps straight from sense to value, and is weakened and diffused if it be forced to dwell among objects of thought. Again, though Mr. Joad rejoices, with twentieth-century Manicheanism, in the mechanization of life because 'it diminishes our intercourse with matter' and so frees our attention for objects of thought, it is this very mechanization which has brought about 'standardized pleasures' and the 'lowbrow' way of

living which he dislikes so much, with its passion at second hand through the cinema, its music at second hand through the gramophone, its substitution of motor-ing for exercise – and its strong craving for raw experience, for football matches, for all-in wrestling, cruel, strenuous and bloody, for war itself, fierce external haphazard reality breaking in upon the intolerable grey known organized world of 'objects of thought.' It is notable, by the way, that mothers (however 'low-brow') and peasants rarely desire these amusements: both are in daily contact with live 'physical objects,' and need no concentrated doses of vitality.

Mr. Joad has been shown to be mistaken in the idea that familiarity with 'objects of thought' is a necessary preliminary to the knowledge of 'objects of value.' It remains to be seen why such a familiarity can bring philosophers to this end, and does not bring 'lowbrows.'

The reason is, I think, that his category of 'objects of thought' includes three dissimilar activities – abstract thinking, utilitarian thinking and verbal thinking. The concept of causation is an instance of the first. The idea of a picture, not as a beautiful thing, but as an investment, of the second: and the third may be illustrated by the fact that the average man thinking, say, of yesterday's murder trial will see it not as a scene inhabited by human beings but as a series of printed words in the paper. Both these last sorts of thinking confine the mind within itself, prevent its access to the knowledge either of things or of values. Mr. Joad must distinguish rather more sharply between types of mental life.

GOD'S SOLDIER. By ST. JOHN ERVINE.  
Heinemann. 2 Vols. 36s.

HERE is the William Booth of Vachel Lindsay's poem – *Booth marched boldly and he looked the chief* – not the polite

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Booth whom some writers have tried to foist off on us. Mr. Ervine has approached his subject not with pious devotion, but with artistic reverence; and here we have a fine, splendidly drawn and skilfully coloured portrait of a man who was the voice of many thousands, but never lost his own individual accent. The difference here, surely, between the leader and the demagogue, the representative statesman and the delegate dictator. No tail ever wagged that divinely-inspired dog – a hound of the Lord, as impetuous, as energetic, as determined and sometimes as wrong-headed as the great saint who first made play with his name, and called his followers dominicans, God's dogs.

After the great mediæval preachers, Booth is the first religious leader of eminence who loved scoundrels before he had improved them. Loved them – or liked them – for and in themselves, not only as sinners and from a sense of duty. Though Christian love can exist without liking, its task is immeasurably lightened by ordinary human affection. Too many saints have small capacity for that, except in a circle of intimates: Booth had a huge capacity for affection, human as well as religious; and one of the greatest attractions of Mr. Ervine's book is his telling of the love-story, simple and of a shy beauty, of William and Catherine.

The outlines of Booth's story are well known: and it says much for Mr. Ervine's skill as a narrator that he succeeds in giving fresh life to a familiar story. The poor boy, son of poor parents; his passion for souls; his realization that, with empty bellies, filthy houses or door-steps, horribly crowded conditions, no leisure but the forced leisure of exanimate idleness, men and women could not learn about their souls or their souls' needs – this led to the foundation of the Army. Born in England, where most people who are not Catholics, think of the Church as a cross between a club, a

concert-hall and a bazaar, Booth had no thought of reforming the Church; or if he had, he quickly abandoned it. What would have happened had the negotiations between him and the Church of England come to anything, it is hard to say. Gentility won; and the apostle of the slums of London had less fraternal treatment than the Apostle of the Gentiles or the Poverello who re-inspired the Church of his century.

In discipline the Salvation Army is severer than most Catholic orders: only the simple will believe that the permission to marry is necessarily a slackening of discipline: too many who are called to celibacy live to be mere bachelors. An officer in the Army lives, at the best, on the level of a humble middle-class family and is denied the relaxations of beer, tobacco, the theatre and the cinematograph. Booth wanted his tools always sharp, and always ready. Of the growth of the Army, of its persecution – no religious movement in our time has been subject to such misrepresentation, abuse and ill-treatment except the Catholic movement in the Church of England – of its works of mercy and reclamation Mr. Ervine gives a glowing picture. For to write the life of the General is to write the history of the Army.

The obedience in the Army is as strict as the obedience in the Society of Jesus: and it is evident that Booth tried the devotion of some of his followers too high. He had a difficulty, of course, which did not come the way of St. Ignatius. He had his own children to deal with, and some of his children had his own imperious temper. All readers will agree with Mr. Ervine, who devotes rather disproportionate space to the controversy, that the manner in which Booth's son and successor was removed from the head of the Army was shabby and injudicious. Few will agree with him that Bramwell Booth's resignation

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was not necessary. The more one reads Mr. Ervine's extremely fair account of that miserable tragedy, the more convinced one is that Bramwell Booth was ill-advised to cling to a position which failing health would have forced him very soon to abandon. To-day there is another Booth at the head of the Army, with something of her father's fire and, it would seem, now something of her brother's tact. If General Evangeline Booth can, during her term, infuse a little more democracy into the government, there seems no reason why the next fifty years of the Army should not be as glorious as its first.

SPRING OF YOUTH. By LL. WYN GRIFFITH.  
Constable. 3s. 6d.

'As I write these words,' says Mr. Wyn Griffith, 'there is division within me. I am writing in a language foreign to the way of life I am so eager to find, and because of this, the world of my boyhood is at once removed from that of the words I am using.'

But this division is common to everyone who tries to find the way back to his own childhood; though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels it is not the speech of infancy, and however faithfully he sets down what he remembers, it is in a language 'foreign to the way of life' he seeks to describe.

Mr. Griffith grew up speaking Welsh, and writes his memoirs in singularly pure English, but it may be doubted whether this fact really makes his task more difficult. He has certainly accomplished it with exquisite skill, and some clue to his method may be found in one phrase: 'I must find the tune and then transpose it.' That is surely a very good description of the method through which every faithful book of reminiscence must pass if it is to be worth anything. The tune is there in our heads – an answering

octave note that continually doubles experience: the buzz of a fly in summer stillness; the sound of rain on leaves in a green-shaded room; the scent of gorse in sunlight. Such things have for many of us a double significance. But why struggle to recapture it, others may ask, weary of such Lot's Wife's literature. And there is only one reply: these things are not the Cities of the Plain from which we flee,

'They are that Cities shining spires  
We travell to.'

They are the reality, as well as the dream; they are, as Mr. Griffith says here, 'different layers of deathlessness.'

The writer of *Spring of Youth* had the good fortune to be born in one of the loveliest parts of Mid Wales, seven miles from the wide estuary of the Dyfi, among the same scenery on which Richard Wilson first opened his eyes. It is not perhaps over-fanciful to imagine that those many-coloured hills which cradled 'the father of English landscape painting' had a potent influence on a poetic child, growing up, in almost unchanged surroundings, some 200 years later. After the first few years the little family moved to Bangor, and here the ring of memories widens: Snowdon crouches on the horizon, while from the grandfather's hill farm 'Anglesea is a carpet' and the mainland below 'has a western look of sunset and evening.'

English is gradually acquired, although 'emotional life never leaves the refuge of Welsh,' but a knowledge of English gives a child superiority over his schoolmates: 'How quickly he can speak English, just like an Englishman, so quick you can't understand him!' There is the growing recognition of music; the first excited hearing of Bach – 'the bass patterned endlessly in a swoop upwards and a slow decline. I shifted my weight from one foot to another, listening to music as I had never listened before.' There are mountain walks with a geo-

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logizing father, and there is the influence of the chapel.

Readers whose knowledge of the religious life of Wales is derived from the writings of a certain school of Welsh novelists will find a different aspect of the matter in this book. Mr. Griffith does not try to disguise those 'undeniably and unnecessarily ugly buildings,' or the narrow creed they frequently embodied, but he shows plainly how 'they stood for revolt at a time when the need of it was great,' and how the history of Wales in the nineteenth century is necessarily a history of the chapels. He does not slur over the appalling heaviness to a child of those Sabbath calms, standing like a wall between Saturday and Monday, when it was a crime, visited by prayers and searchings of spirit, even to take the dog for a walk. But he also catches the religious fervour of the people, the Welsh sermon – 'at its best an Ariel spirit, free of all the arts of speaking'; the glory of Welsh hymn-singing, and 'the emotional pressure which drove a peasantry to build a chapel for its worship and to give its heart to maintaining this private civilization in a hard world of penury.'

The picture of the religious revival of 1904 and 1905, drawn by one who was too young to take part in it and yet old enough to feel its power, is peculiarly interesting. The prayers of the unlettered might occasionally astonish, as when the old quarryman prayed aloud:

'Make me pure, O Lord. Pure as Cadbury's Cocoa, pure as a white cloud on a summer day,'

and there are stories of encounters with the devil that stir the darkest depths of Celtic mythology.

No other book about Wales succeeds so well in capturing that mixture of puritanism and poetry that makes the Welsh character. But English readers need not fear: the writer is an artist, and true artistry is international.

SEVEN PLAYS. By ERNST TOLLER. Lane. 8s. 6d.

IN the most despairing and in some ways the most moving play he has written – *Hoppla! Such is Life*, Ernst Toller gives to its chief character, Karl Thomas, a speech which represents his own thought as well as any in his theatre. Thomas is describing an experience at the front, eager to give a true idea of what war in action is. He is talking to two children, for whom the War is a series of dates and a few cold lessons on the country, its enemies and the means, including gas, used in war. To them he tells how for four days he and his comrades in the trenches had to listen to the agonized cries of a man wounded to death, a man whom they could help neither to death nor to healing.

Four days and four nights he cried. It seemed to us four years. We stuffed our ears with paper. That didn't help. Then all was quiet. Oh, children, if I only had the power to plant imagination in our hearts as seed is planted in ploughed land! Can you make any picture to yourselves of what happened in that time?

FRITZ. Yes.

GRETA. Poor man!

KARL THOMAS. Yes, my dear: poor *man*! Not 'the enemy!' The Man. The *man* cried. In France, and in Germany, and in Russia, and in Japan, and in America, and in England. At such times, when a man plunges deep to the heart of things, he asks himself: Why is all this? What is it all for? Would you ask yourselves that question?

FRITZ, GRETA. Yes.

KARL THOMAS. In every country men puzzled their heads over that same question. In every country it was the same answer. For gold, for land, for coal, for a lot of dead things!



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For these they die, they hunger – and are desperate. That is the answer. And in every country the bravest shouted No! in the face of their blind leaders, demanded that the war should stop, and all wars; and struggled for a world in which all children would be happy. . . Here, they failed. Here, they were conquered

Dramatist of ideas, dramatist of opinions, dramatist of causes, Ernst Toller is first and always a dramatist of men and women. It is here that he differs from such playwrights as Brieux and Shaw in their plays of opinion. His own convictions are as strong as, or stronger than, theirs; but he can never see a principle except as it affects or is affected by the men and women in contact with it. His proletarians are no more all plaster saints of the revolution than are Sean O'Casey's; he knows that the red army has its cowards and traitors and parasites and timeservers, and that man is not saved by Marx alone. His communism, in so far as he is Communist, is nearer William Morris' than Lenin's, and he would sooner convert or convince opponents than liquidate them. For him men are not safely to be measured in any columns, either of the military strategist or the economist. He has a natural kinship for that Christian philosophy which insists on the indefeasible value of any human soul, and has the realism of his race in his recognition of how easily man may become vile. He can be pitiful to the shabby shifts to which mean men are driven, if only their bad actions spring from an ignorant belief that, by perpetuating unjust conditions, they will be able to save life and what makes life valuable – freedom, tolerance and an active love of his brethren.

A natural result of this temper is that his plays are much better and weightier propaganda than the mere Procrustean dramatic tracts of those who

chip and chop and strain their characters to fit a theoretical framework. No one sensitive to the appeal of the theatre could fail to be stirred by the governing idea, the unselfish passion of *Hoppla!*, *Draw the Fives*, *Masses and Men* and *Hinkemann*, as well as by their dramatic excitement, their characterization, ranging from the boldness of the cartoon to the delicacy of a portrait-painting, and their sheer theatrical force. These seven plays, which unfortunately are not dated in this convenient but bibliographically unsatisfactory edition, have added to them a play on Mrs. Eddy, written in collaboration with Herman Kesten. The reader's first thought, if he compares them with the work of any contemporary dramatist writing in English, is of envious amazement at their range, and at the artistic seriousness of a public which could make them successful. Here we have nothing of the capricious social comedy, the purely entertaining farce which is the staple of the English theatre. More than half of these plays are political – all have a tinge of philosophy or religion, all are concerned not with figures who only have life on the stage, but with figures which are alive and are given the chance to express themselves, their agony and their rare happiness, on the stage. They are all plays in praise of life, even *Hinkemann*, the dreadful tragedy of a man whom the War has robbed of virility, is that. For Toller is a poet and he claims unexpected kinship with another great and very disparate dramatist, W. B. Yeats, in his motto for *Hinkemann* – 'The man who has no strength for dreams has lost the strength to live.' They are all plays in praise of truth: and the only man whom Toller loathes and despises is the man who refuses to recognize truth if she appear in unexpected guise and keeping undesirable company. He is the traitor, and the coward.

Toller has a passion – only occa-

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sionally does it threaten to lapse into the morbid – to see and present men and women under an intolerable strain. Is that to say more than he is the dramatist of post-peace Germany? Yet there is more in this desire of his than the need to render life as he saw it. At any time he would have had this passion, as Strindberg had it: to both of them the essential in character, the final truth, is most easily revealed by men so driven by circumstance, or fate, or treachery that they almost despair of their humanity. His plays have, in consequence, the same profound emotional intensity that we find in Strindberg's plays: there is nothing of the scientific Titan, the removed curiosity of the observer interested through duty rather than through love. None of his characters are specimens: and no microscope, no neat slides protect his eyes from the tormented struggles which he sees and reveals. He puts crowds on the stage with a success that has rarely been equalled: to do this he uses the method, also used by Kaiser and by O'Casey, which was called 'expressionist' – a meaningless term. The point is that the method is successful, and is strictly a method of the theatre, not of the study. In many of the plays he uses music, singing, mass-speaking and the devices of the film: with proper production these lend great force to his work.

The actual writing and the artistic competence of dialogue are rather hard to judge from this very mixed series of English versions. Great vigour, passionate indignation, humour, occasional coarseness (nearly always dramatically apt), and lyrical beauty – some of these are left clear in the translations, some sadly obscured. The two translations by Miss Vera Mendel – of *Masses and Men* and *Hinkemann* – are as good as they can be. Here the translator has the sense of the spoken word, an ear for rhythm and the necessary refusal to be tied to a mere

construe. Mr. Ashley Dukes has a hard task in rendering the play about the Luddite riots, *The Machine-Wreckers*, and there is too often a hint of Sheridan Knowles in his blank verse, and occasionally he is misled by the German so that he forgets English idiom: for instance, you may keep 'a sharp watch' on a man, but you watch him closely, not 'sharply.' Mr. Ould's version of *Hoppla!* is quick and vigorous, but also remembers the German too much. Mr. Edward Crankshaw, who is responsible for the other plays, has few gifts for translation except fidelity to his text and accuracy. None of the plays he has rendered read like anything except translations. He has no sense of dramatic speech, and the dialogue has a uniform flatness which has a sadly monotonous effect. Still the publishers must be congratulated on producing, at so small a cost, a volume which should be studied carefully by every enterprising English manager and producer.

MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES. By E. R. EDDISON.  
With decorations by KEITH HENDERSON. Faber & Faber. 10s. 6d.

WE hear much about the standardization and commercialization of literature, and especially of fiction. No doubt there is truth in this pessimistic accusation, for in the hurry and bustle of modern life the writer inevitably becomes contaminated, though whether this age is much worse than any other may be seriously doubted. The economic and nervous difficulties of our times are too often used as excuses for superficial and shoddy work by people who forget that the lighter activities and frivolities of any particular period are so soon forgotten that they are deemed never to have existed. Whenever we read diaries and letters of another age we are always reminded that the writer is bothered by the press of daily affairs, and is submerged in the overwhelming

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competition and noise of an unworthy environment.

Even if these deterrents to solid work are greater in our time than in any preceding period they have still not prevented an occasional up-thrust of literary effort that defies their water-drop torture. From time to time a book appears that is the work of a man or woman totally removed, at least in mind, from the hurly-burly of Fleet Street and the noisy advertisements of publishers. For instance, this new volume by Mr. Eddison might well have been written in the eighteenth century by an author carefully buried away from interruption in one of the towers of Beckford's fantastic castle in the West Country.

Mr. Eddison's imagination, indeed, often recalls that of Beckford, the author of *Vathek*. Mr. Eddison teems with an exuberant book-knowledge. His mind is like a river that has run through all the odd crannies and backwaters of European and Oriental philosophy and sub-philosophy, picking up broken branches, twigs, leaves, frightened animalcules and webbed-footed or furry things, and sweeping them down in an increasing stream of flotsam and jetsam towards the sea, which his violent imagination conjectures to be the bourne of human purpose.

It is almost impossible to give a synopsis of this phantasmagoria. The hero is conceived vaguely as a modern Englishman who has made a cosmic rather than a world-wide reputation as a poet and a painter and a man of affairs. The book opens when he is lying dead at a great age, with a woman standing beside his death-bed. This woman, however, momentarily discovers herself to be the goddess Aphrodite vaguely incarnated in the form of the dead man's wife who died a long time ago. The goddess-wife thus reincarnated into this vague immortal shape promises to fulfil what was throughout his life a vague

aspiration, to bring him to a longed, secret Nirvana called Zimiamvia where he shall enjoy the company and the erotic gifts of this divine creature eternally.

We thus have a sort of pseudo-Oriental reincarnation scene, and the improbability of this is made still more improbable by the fact that the hero appears to live not in one body but in two. The goddess gives herself to each of these, dividing herself for that purpose again into separate incarnations, one of them unaware of its divinity and the other in the full consciousness of her divine nature.

This wild fantasy of remembered and universalized love is set, if it can be said to be set, in a world which has the kaleidoscopic insanity of Strindberg's *Dream Play*. Vast Scandinavian realms unfold before us, and we are vaguely aware that this bifurcated Englishman is the king of them. At the same time we appear to get flashes of English scenery, but heightened just as Turner heightened the familiar into the wild colour-madness of his later pictures. The conflict, the scenery are related in a rich, extravagant prose in which (to quote the phrase of the author) 'every link is damascened with silver and gold.' The characters wear black plumes of the bird of paradise and helmets with shifting iridescence of green and steel-blue fires.

The final effect upon the reader is one of complete bewilderment, and the conviction that this bewilderment is not his own fault but that of the author. The book can never be more than a curiosity of literature which possibly for some readers, it may be in a hundred years' time, will be as it was to the author a garden of escape from the normal and tangible problems of life.

### AT THE PLAY

It has been a good month for the playgoer in London. Only one masterpiece,

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and that not English: but how often do masterpieces occur? It is a little masterpiece, a watercolour of a play, a kind of theatrical sonnet. In big things one can forgive imperfections – indeed the really stupendous things in art appear almost to need, if not imperfections, a great variety of values – which is, perhaps, why most of us think Shakespeare a better dramatist than Sophocles. But the tiny story, the exquisite story must be perfect, all of a piece: and what more rarely exquisite thing was there on the London stage than Martinez Sierra's *The Two Shepherds* at the Old Vic? There were critics who thought the play was a fuss about nothing. An old priest, without much learning, is suspended from parochial work; an old doctor without much science, loses his job. Well, what about it? This. Sierra, in this play, makes the victory of cleverness over wisdom, of learning over skill, the supersession of kindness, sympathy and profound understanding by brightness, 'efficiency,' and undirected competence a symbol of the tragedy of human life, as it is lived to-day. Once more the machine – oh! a very primitive amateur sort of machine – triumphs: automatic judgments are preferred to human values, and the men who can give the right answers to the right questions are preferred to the men who know that neither in religion nor in medicine can anything be of value unless the priest and the doctor understand human sin and mortal suffering. So, on a small scale, Sierra works out that problem. In this production, after thanks have been given to Mr. and Mrs. Granville-Barker for their lovely translation, the whole company must be congratulated. Rarely has the Old Vic. done better. Mr. Macowan's production was a model of unobtrusiveness and tact: Morland Graham's Don Antonio and Cecil Trouncer's Don Francisco (the doctor) were admirable – Morland Graham's priest could not have been better,

that slow, dejected yet courageous walk, his moments of indignation, his kindness and his devotion were all exactly right. Cecil Trouncer had to work a little more: sometimes he seemed to be reminding himself that he was an out-of-date Spanish doctor. The rest of the long company can receive only general praise, except for a word of special commendation for Elsie French's Dona Paquita (the priest's sister) and Raymond Johnson's vigorous, moving portrait of the boy Juanillo. But why was this play produced on the same bill as *Hippolytus*? Why, alas! was *Hippolytus* produced at all? It is a great play, and it would be rash to say it could not be acted so as to make a great impression; but very different methods would have to be used than those of the Old Vic. production. First, Mary Newcombe's Phaedra. Mary Newcombe has a personality entirely unsuited for Greek tragedy, and in her efforts to conquer the range of this tremendous drama she was hopelessly lost. She growled and groaned, she staggered and fell, she swooned and swayed, she professed horror and terror and shame – and she obstinately remained an American gentlewoman brightly determined not to be surprised at finding herself among such undesirable people as Artemis and Aphrodite. Phaedra must be possessed. Euripides' Phaedra belongs to that time when the spirit of man is wakening to a resentment at the chains of fate – a chattel, a sacred chattel, but within the doomed clay the spirit of rebellion, of free will is moving, and informing the destined vehicle with alien passion. Maurice Evans' Hippolytus was good, but the least successful performance he has given this season. He conveyed admirably that his mother was an Amazon – a little too successfully, for he rather left one with the impression that he resented the idea of incestuous adultery more as an interference to his hunting than as an assault on

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his virginity. Also he shouted too much. Still his performance had some moving moments, especially when he is pleading his case before his father, Theseus, of whom Abraham Sofaer gave a dignified but rather thin portrayal. Vivienne Bennett as leader of the chorus was first-rate: she spoke her musical lines with great intelligence and great feeling. Evelyn Hall, as the Nurse, must also be commended for her speaking; but she was sadly miscast. Directly she moved on to the stage, we knew that this nurse would have had Phaedra safely tucked in bed, with a good dose of bromide, and being read to sleep out of a really nice book from the Trozen lending library.

The whole production, however, was one more proof, if it were needed, that if we are to attempt Greek tragedy on our stage, we must abandon any idea of producing it except in an archaic or in a stylized way. A Greek tragedy is a religious rite – whether one can reproduce the religious atmosphere in which it originated is doubtful: but if we cannot, and cannot return to the masks and the cothurni, let us produce it in some highly artificial manner, with no attempt at realism. Mr. Cass's production was dignified and had beauty; but it could not overcome the naturalism of the players. Dr. Gilbert Murray's version was used. It is the fashion, especially favoured by those whose Greek is confined to Alpha and Omega, to despise his translation. It has, however, several advantages. It is easy to speak. It is musical. And it is the work of one who knows thoroughly the language from which he is translating.

What a play *Major Barbara* is! And what a fine, living performance the Old Vic. company gives of it! The discussions in the last act are still wearisome, not because of their length, but because of their inappropriateness to character. Mr. Shaw began his play with Barbara and the army; wrote one superb act for

them, and then loses his head to Cusins and Undershaft. Barbara goes to pieces. The real Barbara, any genuine disciple of William Booth, when she heard of the money offered by Bodger (of the rotten whisky) and her father's offer of another £5,000 would have taken it—taken it with Hallelujahs – 'we'll clean their money, and we'll save their souls!' The play is full of Shaw's favourite escapes from thought into epigram. 'Poverty is a crime' – yes, of course it is, but it is not the crime of the poor; it's the pet vice of the wealthy. Dirt causes disease; but if the soap-maker holds up supplies and people go dirty, the disease that comes is his, not theirs, and in the end will infect him. The Major Barbara of the first act, and she who bullies and cajoles and wrestles with Bill Walker, would not have feared to face and expose the cheap sophisms of that Prince of Darkness, poor Andy Undershaft, possessed by he knew not what power, while she is possessed by what she knows in her heart as with her head.

Maurice Evans' Adolphus Cusins was superb, sly, witty, scholarly, exuberant, shyly calculating. Cecil Trouncer's Undershaft was, at the start, a trifle too consciously bland, but he was good, and in the last act magnificent in force. Leo Genn's Bill Walker, Morland Graham's Shirley and Richard Warner's Snobby Price, together with Buena Bent's Rummy, made of the second act a triumph: it is hard to say one was better than another, but perhaps the chief honours must go to Leo Genn. After them, there is a drop. Ruth Maitland's Lady Brit was well thought out, but she has not the temperament to suggest the kind of managing woman Lady Brit was. Mary Newcombe was better than she has been for some time; but she could not convey Barbara's beauty of soul or passion of character, and she fails, by straining, to express emotional force. Alec Clunes, as a pre-

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P.G. silly ass, did all that should or need be done with Cholly.

Surely the astral body of Mr. Laurence Housman must have attended a performance of Mr Jan Fabricius' *At 8 o A.M.* at the Embassy. It is some years since Mr Housman wrote *The Hangman*, a powerful little piece in which the hangman goes on strike and leaves his unpleasant task to those above him. In *At 8 o A.M.* it is the Governor who goes on strike, and refuses to surrender his prisoner to the Sheriff, whereupon a Home Office servant tries to intervene, and Drummond Osborne, the criminal, is only saved by an unexpected message from London. Mr. Fabricius has spoiled a good theme by making his murderer too sympathetic. Objection to capital punishment should not depend on the *belles mœurs* or the *beaux yeux* of the victim. Also it was a great pity to make Osborne the illegitimate son of the Governor's wife: it would have been dramatically as effective and psychologically much more impressive had Mrs. Bradley only seen in the condemned boy the son she had lost in his childhood. If, however, the boy must be Julia Bradley's child, the revelation ought to be made first at the interview between her and his putative mother; as it is, we hear the same story twice. The acting was, on the whole, very good. Marda Vanne kept Julia Bradley on almost too low a key, and Shirley Bax was almost too silly as Lady Cynthia, but each gave life-like performances. Of the men Wyndham Goldie's Major Bradley, Evan Thomas' Jack Warrington, Alexander Archdale's parson were excellently restrained, while Anthony Shaw's portrait of the nervous, vain and excitable sheriff was a fine piece of work.

At the Gate Theatre there has been a pleasantly old-fashioned piece, by C. K. Munro out of G. B. S., trained in stables near Bradford, *The Seven Deadly Virtues*,

by Hugh Ross Williamson. The play opens in a railway carriage in which to a mixed company, representing the virtues, Francis Meldreth (Hedley Briggs), made up as a cross between Mr. Montagu Norman and Mr Ernest Rhys, is talking about life. He then, to the general comfort, falls asleep. and in a series of visions goes through his life, past and future, during which, at conveniently separated intervals, he has confronted the seven deadly virtues. It is all charmingly naive and simple, and has at times that excitement which young people have in discovering moss-grown truths or lichen-covered heresies. Mr. Williamson is sometimes out in his period. No ordinary girl would have suffered from the alarmed horror with which he credits Alice in 1904, and the feeding-bottle in Obedience (1882) is the wrong shape. Much the best scene was that in illustration of Patriotism – the exposure of a spy, who is an old Cambridge friend of Meldreth's, in a French farm-house in 1915. Here there was genuine conflict of emotion and conviction, honestly presented, not a slick bowling-down of Shavian skittles. There was good, if easy, farce in the scene at the psychiatrist's in 1950; but Mr. Williamson is surely a pessimist in believing that alienists will be talking the same nonsense then that they do now. The acting was on a very high level. Hedley Briggs was versatile, amusing and often moving, and contrived to give to Francis Meldreth a unity of character which the author was quite unable to convey. Charlotte Leigh was a continual delight; and A. Scott-Gatty, especially in the war scene, was superbly the average 'he-man.' Helen Goss and Ann Casson were generally rather badly cast, but Ann Casson in the train as chastity with a cold was very entertaining, and Helen Goss's Fanny in the Cambridge scene was properly seductive – the fact that she suggested the early 'nineties rather than

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1904 was presumably due to the author's confused knowledge of the early Edwardian period. *The Seven Deadly Virtues* would probably be a success in the provinces or the remoter suburbs; but Mr. Williamson is rather too simple and unsophisticated for London.

It is a criticism of the London theatre and an infuriating one for the critic (for who wants to travel to Manchester?) that he should be able to see *Love on the Dole*, by Walter Greenwood and Ronald Gow at the Garrick Theatre, but have had to go to the Manchester Repertory to see Ernst Toller's *Draw the Fires*. It is only too usual, of course, for the work of a man of talent to be widely popular and the work of a man of genius to be appreciated only by the few. But Herr Toller's undoubted genius is expressed in this play with such gusto, there is such gaiety as well as tragedy in his work, it is so true to the humours, oddities and weaknesses of working people as well as to the basic tragic truth of their lives that it is curious that London managers should not realize how great a popular success *Draw the Fires* might have. *Draw the Fires* is one of the most realistic of Ernst Toller's plays and peculiarly suitable for the commercial theatre. It has many very interesting and successful effects of the type called 'expressionist,' the rhythmic work of the stokers in the boiler room; some speaking, chanting and singing in chorus; but the examination, court martial and condemnation of the mutineers in the German Navy of 1917 is realistic writing of an order so high that it becomes poetic. The characters are so honestly and fully seen in all their weaknesses as well as their strength, their tragedy is so deeply felt that, while remaining completely themselves, they become symbols. They are all the worker-martyrs of the world, with their innocence, their stupidity, their weakness, their tragic and muddled heroism. The

scene in the condemned cell, where the men turn in anguish from the thought of the details of their deaths to the memory of the only pleasures and kindnesses that had been within their reach while on service, those of the brothel; their excitement when they hear people in the street singing *The Internationale* and believe that their rescuers are coming – only to realize that it is 'just a crowd of drunks' – is a scene of an almost unbearable poignancy and human beauty. The whole pathos of the unlearned is in Reichpietsch's cry at his trial, 'If I could only say what I really think'; all the despairing anguish of innocent suffering in the cry of his mother, 'They couldn't do that – they couldn't do it – they couldn't shoot my boy'

*Love on the Dole*, though it, too, deals with the sufferings of the poor, is not in the same artistic world as *Draw the Fires*. Its people never become symbolic, more than themselves, they are never, indeed, entirely real people; they are all, after their lights, too good, except the comic characters, who are too bad. They are figures after life, but have no breath of their own. Still the play is a sincere piece of work, extremely moving and very good theatre. It aims at the solar plexus and gets home there. And it is well that it should. It is to be hoped that everyone – and that means most of us – who cannot imagine what it means to try to live on 15s. a week will see *Love on the Dole*. It should be seen, too, for the admirable comic acting of the three weird sisters of Hankey Park, Mrs. Jike, Mrs. Dorbell and Mrs. Bull, as portrayed by Drusilla Wills, Marie Ault and Beatrice Varley. Also for the excellent tragic acting of Mr. Ballard Berkeley as the young reformer Larry Meath, and the super-excellent tragic acting of Mr. Julien Mitchell as Mr. Hardcastle, whose cry 'Oh, God, send me a job!' may well echo in all our ears and hearts. Mr. Alex Grandison, as vital young Harry

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Hardcastle, was extremely convincing.

*Man of Yesterday*, at the St. Martin's, was adapted by the late Dion Titheradge from the French of Jean Bommart. When he remembers *The Return of the Soldier* the critic might well be annoyed that the dramatists had lost so many chances to make a play that symbolized more movingly 'the years that the locusts have eaten,' the hopes that peace has defeated. But the acting of Leslie Banks as James Brett, the bank manager of forty-one, who has a street accident, and, when he 'comes to,' believes himself a soldier of twenty-four, in a base hospital with a 'blighty' wound, has that mysterious and satisfying completeness that does not make one say 'what good acting,' but makes one feel 'I am James Brett.' So one does not criticize the general plan till afterwards; one accepts it, unless it is *too* inherently improbable, as one accepts life, and is moved or excited by what happens. C. V. France as Sir George Rowland, the brain specialist, is a good foil to Brett's wife and her family, played excellently by Gillian Lynd and Winifred Evans and Bromley Davenport. Ann Todd's Katherine Lindon, the young nurse with whom Brett falls in love, was sincere and charming, but so emotional a nurse, even though her emotions were so well suppressed, would never have become a sister. Staff nurse, perhaps, at the most.

Barbara Everest's acting as Queen Anne, in *Viceroy Sarah*, by Norman Ginsbury, has the same satisfying and convincing quality as Leslie Banks'. No one should miss this chance, at the Whitehall Theatre, to step up the back stairs into the past and know this odd, pathetic, stupid queen at first hand. As the Duchess of Marlborough kept her husband's affection and inspired love as well as the desire to be dominated in Queen Anne, it is quite likely that the

lovableness that Irene Vanbrugh cannot completely hide under the rages, tempers, tirades and tantrums of 'Viceroy Sarah' was really there in the first Duchess. Harcourt Williams gave us a kindly, moving picture of Anne's greedy consort, George, Prince of Denmark, and Charles Hickman did an excellent piece of comedy acting as the bullied but uncrushable architect and fop, Captain Vanbrugh.

*Mrs. Nobby Clark* at the Comedy is a nasty shock for the old who crooned about that Moulmein pagoda. Can this be Burma? Can this boring, rackety, Philistine crew have come under the influence of Mandalay? Thunderous dawn forbid! It was sad to see two such fine artists as Esmé Church and Marie Ney struggling with the amateurish dialogue and dead curtains provided by Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Lennox - why did they not revive *The Lake*?

Anyone who enjoys 'the murder game' should go play it with the entire enthusiastic audience at the Kingsway Theatre, aided by Messrs. Fenn Sherie and Ingram d'Abbes, the authors of *Murder in Motley*. The harassed manager of Matthew Forsyth, the deluded and entertaining detective-inspector of Douglas Jefferies, the impertinent programme-seller of Mabel Poulton and several admirable 'bobbies,' all 'give verisimilitude to an otherwise elaborate and unconvincing narrative.'

### AT THE PICTURE GALLERIES

THE exhibition of modern Chinese painting at the New Burlington Galleries is one of very great importance. It is an exhibition of paintings probably as important as any that could be arranged from the work of living English painters; it includes the work of an artist, Mr. Liu, who has a range and command that it would be hard to rival in England; and perhaps its greatest interest is that it



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reveals a prolific and robust art living on its own tradition, a tradition entirely removed from ours, but one supported not only by a longer history, but also by a more informed, serious and sensitive contemporary appreciation.

The first impression of this art is one of impenetrable illusiveness. Is it possible to analyse their approach and discover in what its importance lies? There is clearly no direct appeal. There is no pleasure in the texture of the ink on silk, and most, and certainly all the best, paintings are uncoloured. The only possible sensuous pleasure is the sophisticated appreciation of the beauty of the brush work. There is no real pleasure in the design. Almost all the pictures are well designed, but by artists who have learnt to design as they have learnt to write, so that they may best exemplify the style which they are using, not so that they may produce a design which is new, unique and exciting in itself. There are various styles of writing Chinese, and the calligrapher is expected to be proficient in all; he can make his characters expressive in infinite ways, drawing them spindly or blobby, bold or exquisite, but in form they remain classical. Nor are the paintings a revelation of the artist's personal feelings. The exhibition seems inhumanly impersonal. There is no pleasure in the subject. Indeed, they are monotonous, bamboos and lotuses, birds and rocky landscapes. Where there is a realistic interest, as in the paintings of Mr. Kao Chi-Feng and his pupils, the effect is so vivid that it is extremely unpleasant. But this Cantonese school is fortunately a development 'separate from the bulk of the work in the exhibition.

In the other paintings there is no realism of any sort, there is little incident or sentiment and no touch of drama or romance. Yet it is in the subject that the key to this art is to be found. Chinese

art seems to play with its subjects like a cat with an immortal mouse. The same subjects are toyed with over and over again. Not for their own sake, for any desire to state the reality of the bamboo or the lotus, nor for any feeling that they arouse in the artist, but for their attributes and the artist's sensibilities to them. Confined to this narrow borderline between the intellectual and the emotional, the Chinese find material enough to inspire an infinite variety of pictures. At this exhibition Mr. Liu, who is represented by twenty paintings, is clearly the most important figure. He has a magnificent virtuosity without either ostentation or emptiness. He can be exquisite, as in his 'Mont Branchard, Switzerland,' or in the wandering lines of his 'Lotus,' or grand, as in the 'Eagle,' with its heavy shoulders, or rich and heavy, as in his coloured painting on gold of peaches. Possibly his best picture is the unsympathetic but very memorable 'Old Deserted Horse.' There are many other painters probably of equal, possibly greater, merit, who are represented by only a few works and therefore more difficult to appreciate. And any appreciation is clearly partial and precarious of an art which is so foreign and so exact. Most exquisite were the thin meandering 'narcissi' of Mr. Chang Ta-chien, particularly when contrasted with his sprawling 'Lotus.' Mr. Ti Ping-tsu's only painting of 'Hermitage in Mountain' was a notable pleasure. Easier to approach were paintings such as Mr. Chi Pai-Shih's 'Grape Vine' or Mr. Jen Pailien's 'Still Life.'

Perhaps these paintings are more realistic, or perhaps it is in painting such subjects that European artists approach more nearly to the Chinese purpose in art. Do any English artists pursue this purpose? One is naturally led to consider the modern abstract movement, and the publication of the first number of *Axis*, a quarterly review of contemporary

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'abstract' painting and sculpture, makes it apt. Is the Chinese use of conventional forms the same as the English use of geometric ones? There is unquestionably some correspondence. Mr. Ben Nicholson's pictures have just that adjustment of intellectualism and exquisite emotional sensibility that is characteristically Chinese. There is also a tendency for the abstract movement to establish itself as a new academicism, but one far more rigid and exclusive than any hitherto existing in Europe. This implies the existence of a criticism as sensitive, as learned and as close to the artist as that of the Chinese. The only beginnings of such a criticism to-day are in the writers of *Axis*; its publication is therefore an important event. They have obviously far to go. In China both artists and critics are often connoisseurs, collectors, poets and philosophers all at the same time. Perhaps it is just this intellectual unity and completeness that permits so fine and restricted an art to have such infinite vitality. In England our society is all in pieces. Our philosophers hate pictures, and our painters do not know the elements of philosophy, and they never meet one another. It is obviously dangerous that artists should become involved in æsthetic theory. Also the purpose of the artists included even in the selection of *Axis* is extraordinarily diverse. Mr. Grigson condemns all English artists except Mr. Moore and Mr. Wyndham Lewis, who, in their imaginative power expressed in 'biomorphic abstractions,' far surpass the 'unconscious nihilists of extreme geometric abstraction.' It is a pity that Mr. Grigson's pretentious and ill-written article should be included with such clear and useful writing as that of Mr. Read, Miss Evans and Mr. Paul Nash, but it serves to point out the fundamental differences among 'abstract' artists. Chinese painting might be called 'bio-

morphic abstraction,' but it has no affinity with Mr. Moore's brooding darkness.

Will the abstract movement capture and confine English art? This certainly has an extremely vigorous life at present, life which was represented last month by exhibitions of works by two of the most important artists contemporary with Unit One, Mr. William Roberts and Mr. Blair Hughes Stanton.

Mr. Roberts' show was very small, and most of the compositions were worked out in three mediums, pencil drawing, watercolour and oil. The impression was one of enormous concentration and intensity. Mr. Roberts has discovered a vehicle which seems capable of conveying the maximum of emotional power. The vehicle is interesting in itself; Mr. Roberts' beautifully accurate drawing and the scientific arrangement of his precise forms are very welcome when there is so much loose and idle painting to be seen. But the important part is Mr. Roberts' treatment of his subject. It is typical that he concentrates exclusively on the human figure, for his pictures are essentially a statement of human relationships. In this, in his intensity, in his harsh but curiously satisfying colour and in the degree and purpose of his distortion of forms, Mr. Roberts recalls Signorelli, a painter with whom he is probably comparable in greatness.

Mr. Hughes Stanton is an illustrator of the celestial. Man, whom Mr. Roberts shows so heavily bound to the earth, he raises to ecstasy. His set of twenty-three wood · engravings, illustrating Miss Graves' *Epithalamion*, which were exhibited at the Zwemmer Gallery, are a magnificent series. The movement which flows and culminates in them makes it difficult, if not false, to select any particular one. They have a high poetic quality, the ecstasy of the *Songs of Songs* combined with Miltonic grandeur and

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scale. The other illustrations exhibited, though all, particularly those to *Ecclesiastes*, are interesting, were far less important in size and in conception. The four colour prints were, however, remarkable experiments in what is almost a new medium. They are coloured wood engravings, not coloured woodcuts, and the fineness and richness of the cutting are enhanced by Mr. Hughes Stanton's elimination of a key block (giving the outline), and by the large extent to which he prints his colours on top of one another. It is a medium which requires great science; but Mr. Hughes Stanton has that, and his experiment is full of promise.

The two most important mixed exhibitions last month were those of the National Society and the Painter-Etchers. The latter was lamentably uninteresting. Why can this society not assimilate any younger artists who are alive? Almost the only good prints were those of Mr. Frederick Austin, Mr. Robert Austin, and Mr. Paul Drury. Mr. Robert Austin's latest engravings have a new intimacy, an English warmth of feeling which is a welcome development from his cold Italianate period. The National Society is not ashamed of its bad pictures, it is therefore very much more refreshing to visit than the usual carefully pruned exhibitions. Of the painters represented, the most interesting were Mr. Anthony Bladen and Mr. G. H. Stevens. The emphasis of the exhibition was, however, on the sculpture. One is apt to feel, looking at much minor modern sculpture, that the artists would be much improved by more practice in modelling. Clay cannot be trimmed and polished and left at that, it needs an idea before it will take a shape at all.

The most notable work in this exhibition was Mr. Staite Murray's picture, 'Theme on Greek Pots.' The relation of modern and Chinese painting

is at once raised again by this picture, for though actually representational, its theme is an abstraction. Does the existence of an entirely different sort of art in England preclude the eventual tyranny of the abstract theory? Or is the passing from the one to the other the natural progress of art? This has certainly been the Chinese progress, and the collection of Mr. Eumorfopoulos, which is now offered to the national museums, gives us material, hitherto inaccessible, for studying the progress. One of the most remarkable objects in this collection is a Han painting, about A.D. 200, on brick. It is a Taoist painting, depicting the history of the soul after death. In the foreground is a great chariot riding on clouds conveying souls; in the obscure background (the picture was covered with red paint for symbolic reasons) are two souls mounted on strange animals; towards them fly demons. The drawing of these figures and the bird which precedes them has invested them with a sense of terrific speed unparalleled in Western art. The painting conveys the drama, the strange sense of a foreign, unbounded land which is found in Simone Martini's fresco of Guidoriccio or Sassetta's Journey of the Magi. Again there are the Northern Wei pottery figures which have a similar quality. In particular there is a small figure, its robes are very formalized, the sleeves are heavy and swollen, and the thin shape curves out to a wide circle at the base. The head bends slightly forward and is set on the fallen shoulders in a way that is tragically intense. As a final example, there is the great fresco presented to the Museum by Mr. Eumorfopoulos some years ago, which represents three colossal bodhisattvas floating together, rosy and sublime. Chinese art, therefore, shows a progress from an art of the subject to an art of abstraction from the subject.

# Music

## *MUSIC IN LONDON*

HANDEL, the 250th anniversary of whose birth fell on the 23rd of last month, has just been enjoying a centenary. The value of such celebrations is mainly to a host of publishers, agents, film-directors and critics, and, secondly, to those executive musicians and conductors who may be far-seeing enough to add some extra stock of the composer's works to their repertoires. In the great pool of music in general, a centenary may cause a slight splash, whose ripples are hardly strong enough to reach the shore; but the number of people whose sympathy and attention it really engages is very small indeed. With the majority there seems to be a vague reaction about any specimen of antiquity, namely, of wonder that a thing so old should still be with us, and perhaps a slight feeling of pleasure in participating in a venerable tradition, even if the tradition is no longer vital and the participation passive.

In England, of course, a Handel Centenary has a rather special distinction, since his music has characteristics which we like to consider, rightly or wrongly, English; and it is probably not only his long residence here which has been responsible for the German gibe, that the greatest English musician was Handel. During his years in England he succeeded in riveting his uncanny power on our imagination once and for all, and in all the years that followed, while in Central Europe a tradition of the greatest musical glory was being unfolded, we could produce nothing more reputable than a Dr. Arne, who somehow or other has chattered his lonely way down the ages as an immortal. In contemplating the extraordinary decline of post-Purcellian English music, it is absurd to lay all the blame on Handel. It is only among backward or atavistic societies that exotic influences tend to corrupt, and English music in the seventeenth century was

certainly not undeveloped. It could afford, in fact, to rest on its laurels, and to take that breathing-space to which history is entitled when she has revealed herself in an exceptionally spacious epoch. Glorious though those laurels were, however, it is the sad truth that the English continued to rest upon them when in all decency they should have been once more on the move. At this point Handel is usually accused of stepping in and providing the foreign ready-made article at the expense of home trade; this, however, is a rather poor explanation. If English music was so fragile and tender a bloom that the presence of one great man was sufficient to kill it, it would, if it had matured, have been but a sickly plant. Yet it seemed as though the arrival of a style so mature, so masterful, so immediate and direct, was more than our eighteenth-century musical mentality could assimilate. The fault lay not so much in Handel's strength as in English weakness, and in that unfortunate national characteristic which battens contentedly on the legacy of its forefathers instead of laying out its inheritance in a true spirit of construction. The damage is almost irreparable, and we have nearly forgotten in what our musical inheritance consists. For some time we have been vainly trying to pick up the stray end where it was broken off—to find salvation in olde-worlde Elizabethanisms and pseudo-folk-song. But we have applied ourselves to the manner of the Tudor and Restoration periods, instead of seeking the vigorous spirit which lies beneath. We have grossly misconceived, in fact, the whole nature of tradition.

When our minds turn to Handel, reflections such as these should after all be secondary, for it is on the great qualities of his music that our attention should be primarily focussed. A Centenary may serve to re-vitalize those contacts with the composer which time and custom

# Films

have led us to take for granted. To this end we assembled at the Queen's Hall on February 20th, where Dr. Adrian Boult, in the absence of Sir Thomas Beecham through indisposition, conducted three large-scale works of Handel. The first of these, *Acis and Galatea*, had an unfortunate beginning, for the opening Sinfonia led off at such breakneck speed that not only were the unhappy oboists unable to play their passages, but the whole piece was reduced to a meaningless gabble. Of no great depth, this number might serve to set the scene of action, which is a 'Rural Prospect, diversified with rocks, groves and a river.' So far from sounding rural, the thirty-six lusty violinists succeeded in conveying an impression much more like Oxford Street on Saturday morning. *Acis and Galatea* is more than a 'period-piece,' and does not need any extravagances to give it life. Its elegance is by no means superficial, and cannot be dismissed as 'quaint'. A suspicion of this misconception overhung much of the evening, except so far as the chorus was concerned. There is nothing 'quaint' about the average English choir's idea of how to sing Handel. John Kentish, a young and intelligent tenor, sang the part of Damon with fine sincerity and forthright style.

Handel was prone upon occasion to purloin the works of other composers and include them in his own. Kreisler, on the other hand, has just caused a flutter by confessing to the reverse of this habit – of passing off his own work as that of other people. By this time, this curious musical cuckoo has offspring in a large variety of classical nests, and some confusion is occasioned thereby. Mr. Newman, seriously perturbed lest the general public should imagine that the critics have once more been caught out, hastily produces an article wherein he persuades himself, if nobody else, that

this is untrue. Some are amused by the contretemps, some annoyed, and some, saying that music is music whoever writes it, are indifferent. But few violinists, one imagines, will eschew the Kreisler pasticcios on the grounds that they are fakes, or, knowing them to be fakes, will weary of them sooner than they seem to have done in the past.

## ON THE SCREEN

THERE have been very few outstanding films during the last few weeks. The most spectacular one has an extremely irritating title, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. Anyone who liked *Beau Geste* and wanted more, will find it here. This film is British as only Hollywood knows how to be. It relates the story of Colonel Stone, a very commanding officer of the Bengal Lancers on the North-West Frontier and his young son who is sent straight from Sandhurst to his father's regiment, full of patriotism and eager for the adventurous life of Empire building.

Colonel Stone's reception of his son is more than chilly – he almost cuts him dead. This extreme attitude towards the boy led one to believe either that the Colonel did not approve of his regiment or that he disapproved of himself for having had a son. Actually he was moved by a jealous regard for the reputation of his regiment and a desire to play for safety by only having tried men gazetted to him. Young Stone, depressed by his father's welcome, disobeys orders and behaves in so foolish a manner that he is kidnapped by a disloyal native ruler who, by means of torture, extracts information regarding a certain route along which ammunition will travel. The Colonel will not move an inch to save the life of his disobedient son, with the result that the ammunition is captured by the enemy; this forces the Colonel to move heaven and earth considerable

## Films

distances in order to subdue hordes of frontier rebels now very well armed. Fortunately this martinet of a Colonel was unlucky in having other unruly senior officers apart from his son. In spite of strict orders not to leave camp, two of these young officers had already broken away from their duties and dressed in native costume, gone in search of the erring son. They find him by being captured themselves and thrown into the same lock-up. At the critical moment of attack by their own regiment they manage to escape and turn the tables, in fact the village, on the enemy by blowing up the greater part of the ammunition; and one of the three is killed in the process. The Colonel must never know of his son's guilt and so, at the end of the film, we see him pinning decorations on him, the surviving junior officer and the saddle cloth of the dead hero's horse. Naturally the son had great difficulty in not breaking down, and the horse, which presumably had had one or two of the quietest days of its life, looked mildly surprised. The film had excellent speed and some fine shots of a Lancer regiment in action, but are Colonels really like that, and is this how decorations are worn? All the parts are exceedingly well played. Aubrey Smith as the second in command kept a stiff upper lip, held a straight bat and was in every way the perfect backbone for regiments and empires. Gary Cooper played some delightful scenes – the most satisfying being those in which he expressed his views on the army in general and his Colonel in particular. These scenes were in themselves a criticism of the film.

Having escaped Courts Martial by a very narrow margin, it was possible to cross the road and attend the trial of *Evelyn Prentice* in American courts. The Prentice family consisted of three people – Mr. Prentice, Mrs. Prentice and their incredible daughter aged five or six.

Mr. Prentice at the time of this story is the most sought-after attorney in the United States. Working twenty hours in the day leaves very little time for family life, and so Mrs. Prentice becomes a suitable subject for a blackmailer's craft. The plot is hackneyed enough. Mrs. Prentice finally has a struggle with the blackmailer to get back letters she has written to him. In the course of the struggle a revolver she is using to emphasize her threat goes off accidentally and she imagines she has killed the blackmailer; actually he is finished off by a jealous girl friend who finds him a few minutes after Mrs. Prentice's flight. The woman is arrested and Prentice is urged by his wife to defend her.

Prentice's eloquence in court makes it appear possible that the woman will be acquitted. At a critical moment Prentice gets news from outside which makes him realize that his wife is involved. Before he has time to decide what action he shall take, the prosecution's bullying of the prisoner is too much for Mrs. Prentice, who rises in the court and declares her guilt. Prentice immediately springs to action, proves that his client did commit the murder after all, and even forces a confession from her. Prentice's gratitude towards the murderer and professional decency puts him in an awkward position. He reverts to his original job of defending the murderer which he does so successfully that she is acquitted – a hard-working man. The Prentice family set off for a holiday in Europe, presumably happily united, though they still had that child with them.

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